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THE "IMPERSONAL" HUMAN NATURE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE INCARNATION: AN ASSESSMENT OF GORDON CLARK'S LATER CHRISTOLOGY

by

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the history the church various formulations have been suggested as explanations of the doctrine of the Incarnation. Historic Chalcedonian Christology holds fast to the formula of "one person in two natures." Many have held that this position entails what has been called the "impersonal human nature of Christ." This aspect of the traditional doctrine continues to come under attack since it is alleged that it implies that Jesus' humanity is not genuinely like ours and it is not supported by Scripture which portrays Jesus as a human person.

Among the most recent objectors to this doctrine is the work of Gordon H. Clark in The Incarnation. Clark was a champion of orthodoxy and firm advocate of the Westminster Confession of faith. Clark's writings prior to The Incarnation all expressed a firm belief in Christology as understood and expounded in the Chalcedonian creed. Clark boldly claimed that those who reject Chalcedon were not Christians. In this final work Clark makes what appears to be a significant change. Clark claims that the notion of an impersonal human nature is not Biblical. Rather, the Biblical evidence, combined with a philosophically precise definition of person, points to the existence of two persons in the

incarnation: the man Jesus and the Second Person of the Trinity.

This thesis seeks to answer Clark's objections to the impersonal human nature. Close examination is given to the historic context of the Chalcedonian creed and in particular Cyril of Alexandria to determine what exactly was intended in the formulation "one person in two natures." The orthodox doctrine is seen as not entailing a truncated view of the humanity of Jesus nor does it jeopardize the salvation of the believer. The critical issue is the historic understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum* whereby both the human and divine attributes are predicated of the one person who is the Logos of God. Clark's formulation is found to be an inadequate expression of the Biblical evidence and suffers from the same problems as that of historic Nestorianism.

To my wife Jan--a light in my darkest hours. Thank you for believing in me and making this a dream come true.

To Joshua, Adam, and Sarah. Thank you for being so patient while dad worked on his thesis

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Finally, my greatest tribute is due to the Lord for His enduring faithfulness, unfailing love, and endless mercy. This thesis is offered to the praise of His glory and it is my prayer that it will provide clarity where there is confusion and assurance where there is doubt.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." The doctrine of the Incarnation is incredibly complex, profoundly mysterious, and utterly awe inspiring. It has been the object of intense attack and deepest devotion. It confounds the wise, yet comforts the simple. It is the very heart of the gospel. Herein lies the glory of Christianity--Jesus Christ, very God and very man. The thought is breathtaking, its study the highest privilege.

The complexity of the Incarnation is witnessed by the multitude of volumes written to explain or defend it. The significance of the issue is testified by the contemporary debate over religious pluralism where the affirmation or denial of the Christian dogma of the Incarnation has wide ramifications. John Hick asserts, "If Jesus was literally and uniquely God incarnate, Christianity is thereby singled out as the only religion founded by God in person."[1] Some of the greatest minds of the church have wrestled with the issue of what it means to say "the Word became flesh." If there is any consensus of opinion it is that the subject is not an easy

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[1]John Hick, The Metaphor of God Incarnate (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1993), 162.

one. Gordon Clark says, "The real difficulty with the Incarnation is its real difficulty."[2] Rowan Williams notes, "Christology is a riddling science; but then, it deals with God and man, and God and man are riddling beings."[3] Williams' comment highlights part of the difficulty. In the Incarnation one has to deal not only with the question of what is God but also what is man. The problem is compounded by the confusion over the terminology. The vocabulary grows with successive generations. The early church had hypostasis, ousia, physis, and prosopon. The scholastics added subsistence, esse, ens, obediential/natural potency, and suppositum. The contemporary scene adds fully versus merely human, aspective and empirical humanity, phase and substance sortals.

The most difficult word in the debate is probably "person." Its meaning has profound significance for more than one discipline. Psychologists debate the relationship of consciousness and self-consciousness to personhood, bio-ethicists debate the origins of personhood (e.g., is a zygote a person? a fetus? an infant?), and philosophers theorize about "successor persons" (the resulting persons after a split-brain experiment). Remaining sensitive to these issues while trying to expound a Biblically based, logically coherent understanding of the Incarnation may seem well nigh

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[2]Gordon H. Clark, The Incarnation (Jefferson, Md.: The Trinity Foundation, 1988), 67.

[3]Rowan Williams, "'Person' and 'Personality' in Christology," The Downside Review 94 (1976), 260.

impossible. In spite of these problems the efforts to explain the Incarnation continue. But why? Hasn't enough been said? Augustine suggests,

> it is best that many persons should write many books, differing in style but not in faith, concerning even the same questions, that the matter itself may reach the greatest number--some in one way, some in another.[4]

While Augustine is certainly right there is another, more critical, reason. The Incarnation has recently come under renewed attack. It is seen as either philosophically incoherent, Biblically unjustified, religiously insensitive, or hopelessly outdated. In particular, the current debate concerning personhood either explicitly or implicitly says the notion of an "impersonal" human nature is absurd.

The history of the doctrine of the Incarnation is a long one. The creeds, councils, and principle players have all each been the subject of monographs. This work will focus on the work by Gordon H. Clark, The Incarnation.[5] Clark had a distinguished career as a Christian philosopher. Among the many who acknowledge an indebtedness to Clark are Carl F. H. Henry, E. J. Carnell, Ronald Nash, and Harold Lindsell. Nash comments:

> From the year when J. Gresham Machen died (1937) to the first publications of Henry and Carnell after World War II, Clark stood almost alone for the set of essential beliefs that came to serve as the foundation of

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[4]Augustine. "On the Trinity." In Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church, vol 3, (First series, ed. Philip Schaff. Buffalo: The Christian Literature Co., 1887), 19.

[5]Clark, The Incarnation.

> evangelical scholarship in the 1950s. Others who may have shared Clark's convictions neglected the vital matter of getting those views into print.[6]

It was Clark's ardent defense of the Christian essentials that first caused this writer to appreciate his writings. His work on the Incarnation, however, reveals a significant change.

Prior to The Incarnation Clark contends for the orthodox Chalcedonian understanding of the Incarnation. In The Incarnation he makes what appears to be a change in opinion. Clark argues that in the Incarnation there are two persons, a divine person and a human person. To any orthodox Christian this sounds like Nestorianism. A short history of Clark's writings will reveal his shift in expression.

In What do Presbyterians Believe,

> The next important advance was to define the doctrine of Christ as one Person with two natures. This was done at Chalcedon in A.D. 451. . . . The main idea is not too difficult to understand. In order to serve as a mediator, the Son of God had to become a man. . . . In addition to the view that Jesus was 'God in a body,' a theologian by the name of Nestor conceived Jesus Christ to be two different persons: one person purely human, the other purely divine. . . . [the] Chalcedonian doctrine is necessary to support the function of Christ's mediatorial office.[7]

In 1979 he wrote in his commentary on Colossians, "The Christology of the New Testament is admirably summed up in the creed of Chalcedon; and those who repudiate the creed . . .

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[6]Ronald Nash, "Clark and Contemporary Thought," in Gordon H. Clark: Personal Recollections, ed. John Robbins (Jefferson, Md.: The Trinity Foundation, 1989), 87.

[7]Gordon Clark, What do Presbyterians Believe (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed), 1956.

are simply not Christians."[8]

In The Trinity,

> . . . the incarnate Jesus has two wills, one divine, one human; and yet even with a human will, and a 'reasonable soul,' he is not a human person. Nestorianism, with its assertion that Christ was two persons, though plausible on the ground of this psychology, is nonetheless, on the ground of the mediatorial atonement, a heresy.'

In The Atonement,

> Christ, as the Scripture references will soon show, was a divine person, the eternal Jehovah, the Wisdom, Power, and Logos of God; and while remaining what he was, associated with himself or assumed to himself a complete human nature.[10]

The critical point is that in all Clark's early writings there is no indication that he holds to anything but the orthodox doctrine of one person in two natures. But note the change:

> Can one person have two wills and two intellects? Christ is commonly said to have had two wills, though his human will does not make him a person. What in addition to will and intellect is necessary to make a human body a human person? The human 'nature' of Christ is supposed to have lacked an essential characteristic of a person. What was it that he did not have? How can he be a true man without being a human person. . . Is it not plausible that the Church Fathers did not understand what they were saying?[11]

Again:

> If the human nature has no human will, it is hardly a human nature, and therefore the view reverts to

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[8]Gordon H. Clark, Colossians: Another Commentary on an Inexhaustible Message (Phillipsburg, N.J., Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 65.

[9]Gordon H. Clark, The Trinity (Jefferson, Md.: The Trinity Foundation, 1988), 59.

[10]Gordon H. Clark, The Atonement (Jefferson, Md.: The Trinity Foundation, 1987), 34.

[11]Clark, The Incarnation, 17.

> Apollinarianism. But if the humanity of Jesus includes a human will and is thus a complete human being, we have Nestorianism again. Neither ancient nor modern Christology has escaped this dilemma.[12]

Clark seems to separate himself from the "orthodox" view when he says, ". . . according to the orthodox doctrine, Christ was not really a man as we are, for we are persons and Christ was only a 'nature.'"[13] He continues:

> However much we may wish to avoid Nestorianism, at least later Nestorianism, we must insist that Jesus was a man, 'the man Christ Jesus.' Nowhere does the Bible say that he was only a 'nature.'[14]

Finally:

> Some unfriendly critics will instantly brand the following defense of Christ's humanity as the heresy of Nestorianism.[15]

Clark's change is undeniable. Regrettably, no where does Clark indicate that what he says in The Incarnation differs from anything he has said before.

The Problem of Ambiguity in the Chalcedonian Creed

Clark faults Chalcedon for not defining its terms. Grillmeier sees this as an advantage:

> The work of the Fathers of Chalcedon is really 'dogmatic.' . . . They produce formulas as witnesses to the Word and not as scholars. None of them could have given a definition of the concepts with which they had now expressed christological dogma. This had the disadvantage of leaving much unclear, but at the same time the

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[12]Ibid., 22.

[13]Ibid., 31.

[14]Ibid., 50.

[15]Ibid., 75.

> advantage--in view of the world-wide significance of the statement--of leaving open the expression of much about which the Fathers could not as yet think explicitly.[16]

Though the terminology may not be as precise as we might like the thought is clear.

> Even though the concepts of hypostasis and prosopon have not yet been defined, the sense of the dogma of Chalcedon is quite clear. The Fathers mean to say that while there is a real distinction between the natures of the Godhead and manhood, Christ is still to be described as 'one', as 'one person or hypostasis.'. . . It is not the task of the councils to produce metaphysics, but to serve the church's proclamation of revelation. The formula of the council states only the bare essentials of what was needed to resolve the difficulties of the time . . .[17]

Clark would surely respond, What advantage can there be in discussing a subject with words you cannot define? The question is a good one but misses a very fundamental point. The inability to define a term with absolute precision does not preclude intelligent discussion from taking place. How often has a child asked the meaning of a word and we find ourselves at a loss to give a precise definition. We discover that a word we may very well understand can be difficult to define. Yet we still have no problem using the word in everyday conversation. Philosopher J. P. Moreland comments:

> No philosopher to my knowledge has given a universally accepted definition of 'knowledge.' I couldn't for the life of me define 'history.' I'm not sure I could define 'love'; I'm not sure that I could define to everyone's satisfaction what God is nor how I refer to any of these entities. Nonetheless, it does seem reasonable that I could know something about these things, whether or not I

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[16]Aloys Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol 1, trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1965), 545.

could give an exhaustive treatment of how those terms get meaning. We can know them truly without knowing them exhaustively.[18]

The terminology of Chalcedon is not perfect. The contemporary Christological discussion is divided on the adequacy of those terms. Clark's objections are neither new nor unique to him. Before proceeding further we shall briefly examine the New Testament data concerning the Incarnation.

The New Testament Doctrine of the Incarnation

The doctrine of the Incarnation is based on evidence inferred from the New Testament. Christ is portrayed as genuinely human and divine in nature yet he is referred to as only one person.

The Humanity of Christ

The last century has seen a growing interest in Christ's genuine humanity. The church's emphasis on the deity of Christ is stimulated by a perceived docetism. D. M. Baillie's clarion call "No more Docetism" is still cited with great fervor as if the church were indifferent to Christ's humanity. Clark states, "The creeds and the theologians assert 'a true man' and their explanations deny it."[19] The New Testament clearly affirms the genuine humanity of Christ. Those around him believed he was a man (John 7:27; 10:33, 41).

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[18]J.P. Moreland and Kai Nielsen, Does God Exist (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 59.

[19]Clark, The Incarnation, 68.

Even those who recognized something different about Jesus referred to him as a man (John 4:29; 7:46; Mark 15:39). Twice in Peter's denials of Jesus he refers to him as a man (Matt 26:72, 74). The testimony is clear from those who were with Jesus: he was a man.

The witness of Scripture is that Christ is a man and it is difficult to see any reason to add to that an itemized list of the constituents of humanity to bolster that fact.[20]

The Divinity of Christ

Does the New Testament teach that Jesus is God? Any number of scholars today would say clearly it does not.[21] A recent definitive work from a conservative position is that of Murray J. Harris.[22] Harris establishes with impeccable exegesis and judicious fairness that the New Testament predicates deity to Jesus of Nazareth. Among the strongest verses are John 1:1; 20:28; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; II Pet 1:1. The liberal understanding that an evolution in Christological thinking took place between the time of Jesus and Paul due to

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[20]I. H. Marshall says, "The Gospels do testify to the real humanity of Jesus, but they do so in an indirect and incidental manner. For them the status of Jesus as a man was not a theme of interest but was taken for granted." The Origins of New Testament Christology (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 44-5.

[21]John Hick, The Metaphor of God Incarnate. Maurice F. Wiles, "Does Christology Rest on a Mistake," Religious Studies 6 (1970): 69-76. Michael Martin, The Case Against Christianity (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), 1991.

[22]Murray J. Harris, Jesus as God (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House), 1992.

Hellenistic influences has been adequately answered by conservative scholarship.[23] Other contemporary objections to the deity of Christ are based on either dismissing the significant self claims of Christ as inauthentic or by driving a wedge between the Christology of the Synoptics and that of the Gospel of John. These objections have also been adequately addressed by conservative scholars.

The Unity of the Person in the New Testament

The standard theologies appeal to two strands of evidence from Scripture in support of the unity of person in Christ.[24] The first strand is the absence of any evidence indicating a twofold personality in Christ. Hodge says we have no recorded instances of the Son of God speaking with the Son of Man. The second strand is the consistent use of Jesus referring to himself in the singular. One exception is John 3:11, "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and you do not receive our witness." A variety of interpretations have

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[23]See Martin Hengel, The Son of God (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); I. H. Marshall, The Origins of New Testament Christology; Millard Erickson, The Word Became Flesh (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1991), 461-79.

[24]Millard Erickson, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1983-85), 724-26; Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 555; Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, vol 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, n.d.), 382-83; Thomas C. Oden, The Word of Life (New York: Harper Collins, 1989), 169-71; Augustus Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), 684-86.

been offered.[25] None postulate a dual person in Christ. Other plural pronouns used by Jesus clearly refer to his disciples (see John 9:4; Mark 9:40 and parallels; and Matt 17:27).

Clark objects to both strands of evidence. We summarize his objections:[26] 1) The negative evidence is an argument from silence and therefore a logical fallacy, 2) John 21:25 teaches that much is left out of the Gospel. Presumably, the conversations between the Logos and the man Jesus have all been omitted. And, 3) there are some statements which are attributed to Jesus which he could not have spoken if he were just a man. But Hodge, and the other theologies which follow him, may not be so easily dismissed.

Is the negative argument a logical fallacy? It is an argument from silence, but is every argument from silence a fallacy? Irving Copi gives an important qualifier to this argument.

> In some circumstances it can safely be assumed that if a certain event had occurred, evidence for it would have been discovered by qualified investigators. In such a case it is perfectly reasonable to take the absence of proof of its occurrence as positive proof of its non-occurrence. Of course, the proof here is not based on ignorance but on our knowledge that if it had occurred it would be known.[27]

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[25]See D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 198-99; and Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971), 221-22.

[26]Clark, The Incarnation, 45.

[27]Irving M. Copi, Introduction to Logic, 7th ed. (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co, 1986), 95. The same point is observed by D. A. Carson, Exegetical Fallacies (Grand Rapids,

The negative argument implies that if Jesus had been two persons there should have been some indication of it somewhere in the New Testament. How reasonable is this assumption? What would a conversation between Jesus and the Logos look like? Without Scripture informing us of the subject (Jesus the man) and object (Logos) an observer of such a communication would probably think Jesus were either praying or speaking to himself? To effectively employ this argument from silence one must prove that such conversation was necessary (or at least expected), observable, and understood for what it was (not mistaken for some other kind of communication). This would be most difficult. The argument seems to assume a single-person theory. In other words, assuming Jesus is one person we should not find any conversations between two persons and in fact we don't. This piece of evidence then, it seems, can be harmonized with either side of the debate. Whether or not it is a fallacy depends on the strength of evidence for the reasonable expectation of a recording of a conversation between the two persons of the Incarnation. While Hodge did not explicitly argue this point he apparently assumed it as part of his argument.[28] Lacking this extra bit of evidence the negative

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Mich.: Baker Book House), 140.

[28]Erickson contrasts the lack of references to duality in Jesus' "thought, action, and purpose" to those "indications of multiplicity within the Godhead as a whole, for example, in Genesis 1:26. . .Yet Jesus always spoke of himself in the singular. . .Jesus says that he and the Father are one, yet

argument is slightly weakened. Though weakened, we feel the omission is still problematic for a two-person Christology.

What about John 21:25? Clark's use of this verse is problematic. Does his use of the verse permit any restriction? Some might argue that Jesus spoke with Martians but these conversations were omitted. What is the purpose of this statement? Was it really meant to simply inform the reader that Jesus did many other things? D. A. Carson's comments are helpful:

> Doubtless this may be taken as a pardonable exaggeration, but the stylistic and theological care of the Evangelist throughout the work argue decisively against the suggestion. If in v. 24 the Evangelist has already alluded to the Prologue, it is best to think he is doing so again. The Jesus to whom he bears witness is not only the obedient Son and the risen Lord, he is the incarnate Word, the one through whom the universe was created. If all his deeds were described, the world would be a very small and inadequate library indeed.[29]

What should we conclude? We do not need John 21:25 to tell us that not everything Jesus did was recorded. We know the same is true of the other Gospels without them having to tell us. John's point is more profound. Clark has inferred a rather mundane point from a Scripture with a different intention. None of this, of course, shows Clark is wrong in saying "*maybe* the Logos and Jesus held some sort of

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makes no reference to any type of complexity within himself." Erickson, Christian Theology, 724-25. This is a good attempt. Clark thinks there are indications of plurality since he distinguishes between statements made by the man Jesus and those of the Logos.

[29]Carson, The Gospel According to John, 686.

conversation," but it should demonstrate that John 21:25 has little to do with it.

Finally, what of these "statements" that the *man* Jesus by himself could never have said. Clark gives no examples at this point but in other places he covers several and those will be dealt with in a later chapter. In general, the problem is that Clark does not recognize the *communicatio idiomatum*. Traditional orthodoxy agrees that the man Jesus did not create the world and deity cannot thirst, but by virtue of the communication of properties both can be attributed to the single person of the Son.[30] This will receive greater treatment in chapter 4.

Hodge was not ignoring Scripture nor violating logic. His logic may be lacking the necessary details but it is not necessarily flawed. Furthermore, Hodge shows greater sensitivity to Scripture than many others.

The second strand of evidence is on the positive side. Scripture always speaks of Jesus with a singular person. All references to Jesus in third person are singular. A passage of particular importance is Col 1:15-23. The passage begins by identifying the Son (identified as such in v 13) as the "image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation." Verse 16 reveals him as the creator of all things. This cannot be true of any human since humanity is part of the

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[30]New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol 4 (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1967), s.v. "Communication of Idioms," by J. F. Rigney.

created order. The passage goes on, with no apparent change of referent, to say, "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead" (v 18). Paul also speaks of the "blood of His cross" (v 20) and being reconciled "in His fleshly body through death" (v 22). These are properties that are not true of the divine nature as portrayed in Scripture. They are clearly references to Jesus the man. But Paul makes no indication that he is speaking of two different persons. The creator of the world died on the cross to reconcile us and present us holy, blameless, and beyond reproach. If Paul can speak this way then so can the church so long as we understand how the language is being employed.

This traditional interpretation has come under attack by, among others, James D. G. Dunn. Acknowledging that the passage seems to be a "clear statement of the deity and pre-existence of Christ" he asks: "Would this interpretation express the meaning intended by the original author? The answer would have to be No!"[31] Dunn argues that the Colossian hymn is influenced by Jewish wisdom literature (pre-Christian Hellenistic Judaism).[32] Paul applies this wisdom language to Christ (I Cor 1:24, 30). Since the wisdom language has no

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[31]James D. G. Dunn and James P. Mackey, New Testament Theology in Dialogue (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), 55. For a fuller treatment of the passage see his Christology in the Making (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980), 187-96.

[32]Dunn, Christology in the Making, 165.

implication of personal pre-existence it is foreign to read that into the texts where Paul uses it. Paul is using language to express a very specific thought: "*Jesus is the exhaustive embodiment of divine wisdom; all* the divine fullness dwelt in him."[33] Furthermore, the idea of a pre-existent being is "questionable" and would have caused Paul to react as a result of his monotheism.[34] The traditional understanding of this passage is reading it with fourth-century glasses on. Dunn's argument has at least three problems.

First, Dunn fails to justify the *level* of influence, if any, that wisdom theology has on the passage. Pannenberg comments: "In the history of ideas absolutely nothing is clarified and understood by the phrase: 'this or that has 'influenced' something or other."[35] The only proof Dunn offers is the existence of the parallel itself.

Second, Dunn unjustifiably restricts Paul's meaning to that of the parallel in the primary wisdom literature. This methods fails to see that Paul may be using the language of the wisdom literature with a different referent in mind and, hence, new significance. Samuel Sandmel cautions,

> Indeed, to make Paul's context conform to the content of alleged parallels is to distort Paul. The knowledge on

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[33]Ibid., 195.

[34]Ibid., 194-95.

[35]Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), 153.

> our part of the parallels may assist us in understanding Paul; but if we make him mean only what the parallels mean, we are using the parallels in a way that can lead us to misunderstand Paul.[36]

Third, to complain that the traditional interpretation would jeopardize Paul's monotheism fails to appreciate the creative ways Paul could incorporate Jesus into his existing Jewish monotheistic framework while giving Him equal status with Yahweh.[37]

The Scriptures reveal Christ as fully divine and genuinely human yet existing as only one person.[38] The early Christians struggled to properly understand and unpack the meaning of the New Testament data. Working within the constraints of monotheism they sought to explain how Christ could be divine. The entire discussion was governed by the dictum of Gregory of Nazianzus: "For that which he has not assumed he has not healed".[39] At the heart of the matter was

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[36]Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," Journal of Biblical Literature 81 (1962), 5.

[37]See Harris, Jesus as God, 294-5; and Donald A. Hagner, "Paul's Christology and Jewish Monotheism," in Perspectives on Christology, ed. Marguerite Shuster and Richard Muller (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 19-38.

[38]See I. Howard Marshall, "Incarnational Christology in the New Testament," chap. in Jesus the Savior (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 165-80; and Robert L. Reymond, Jesus, Divine Messiah (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990).

[39]Gregory of Nazianzus, "To Cledonius Against Apollinaris (Epistle 101)," in Christology of the Later Fathers, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 218.

the salvation of the believer. The fruit of their labor is manifested with supreme eloquence in the Chalcedonian creed.

CHAPTER 2

CHALCEDONIAN CHRISTOLOGY AND THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

The Chalcedonian creed has become a standard of orthodoxy for Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox churches. Through the centuries it has become regarded by some with great admiration, by others with equal disdain and many falling in between.[1] The Lutheran scholar Oskar Skarsaune says, "I personally view the Chalcedonian Definition as reflecting great theological and ecclesiological wisdom."[2] At the other end of the spectrum is the more liberal opinion of Maurice Wiles who argues that traditional Christology rests on a mistake and therefore, "It is true that, if I am right, the whole of the classical Christology would have to be dismissed."[3] This spectrum of opinion can now be seen in Clark's writings. At one point Clark wrote, "The Christology of the New Testament is admirably summed up in the creed of Chalcedon; and those who repudiate the creed . . . are simply

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[1]Carl F. H. Henry provides an excellent summary of the myriad of opinions on Chalcedon in The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1992), 89-113.

[2]Oskar Skarsaune, Incarnation: Myth or Fact?, trans. Trygve R. Skarsten (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 123.

[3]Wiles, "Does Christology Rest on a Mistake?" 75.

not Christians."[4] In The Incarnation he charges the creed with contradiction and non-sense.[5] Surely a creed which contradicts the genuine humanity of Christ and is characterized by non-sense terminology cannot be considered to be an admirable summary of New Testament Christology.

Agree or disagree all sides understand that Chalcedon is critical to the history of Christology. The issues surrounding it are numerous and complex. We shall focus only on the issues relevant to this thesis. First, we shall examine some of the more important terms used by the creed. Second, does the creed teach that the single person of the Incarnate Jesus is numerically the same as the pre-existent Logos? Finally, does the creed teach that the human nature of Christ is impersonal and, if so, what is meant by the concept. We proceed to the first issue.

Definition of Terms

Clark's complaint about the terminological confusion over Chalcedon is not new. As noted in chapter one, however, not everyone is agreed that the creed should have set forth definitions. An ecumenical creed is simply not the place for the elucidation of philosophical nomenclature. But Clark is perhaps looking too closely at the creed itself for all the answers. He asserts, "Its [Chalcedon's] bishop-authors did

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[4]Clark, Colossians: Another Commentary on an Inexhaustible Message, 65.

[5]Clark, The Incarnation, 5n4.

not explain, and probably did not themselves know the meanings of 'rational soul,' 'consubstantial,' 'nature,' 'subsistence,' and above all 'person.'"[6] Later, when he discusses the word "nature" he says, "Thus, reading Aristotle, we know what he means. But the bishops have given us no hint as to what they meant."[7] This portrayal of Chalcedon seriously over estimates the problems.

Clark ignores the fact that many of the definitions were hammered out during the Trinitarian controversy with the Nicene Creed. Consider what Eusebius of Caesarea says on the terms "of the substance" and "consubstantial" in the Nicene creed:

> When they formulated this statement, I did not let it pass without examination in what sense they said 'of the substance of the Father' and 'consubstantial with the Father.' So questions were raised and answered and the meaning of the phrases was tested by reason. Thus it was declared that they used the phrase 'of the substance' to indicate his being of the Father, but not as if he were a part of the Father. . .But the phrase 'consubstantial with the Father' indicates that the Son of God bears no similarity with the creatures of God that came into being, but is in every way made like only to the Father who begot him.[8]

The importance of this passage is that it demonstrates the Fathers were not careless in the terminology they selected. It is also gives a better understanding of what they meant by these expressions in particular. This more precise

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[6]Ibid., 15.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Edward R. Hardy, ed., Christology of the Later Fathers (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 338-39.

understanding is discovered not by looking at the Nicene creed but by examining the documents circumstantial to the creed's making. By the time of Chalcedon many of these terms were carrying their Nicene meanings. To hash them out all over again would have been superfluous. Likewise, a more precise understanding of Chalcedonian language can be gained by examining the discussions that accompanied the making of that creed. For a creed to "say it all" destroys its purpose.

In spite of the difficulties understanding Chalcedonian language a consensus seems to exist that we can have a decent grasp of what the Fathers meant. Klass Runia says, "Yet it is not impossible to obtain a fairly good idea of what the Fathers of the Council meant by the terms."[9] John Hick, in his earlier days, agreed,

> the fundamental intention of the creed-makers is clear enough, and is not affected by our modern objection to the term 'substance.' The intention expressed in the phrase omoousias to patri was to assert continuity of life, being, nature, existence between Jesus and the Godhead.[10]

There are four principle terms which must be understood: ousia, physis, hypostasis, and prosopon.[11]

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[9]Klaas Runia, The Present-day Christological Debate, Issues in Contemporary Theology Series (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 103.

[10]John Hick, "The Christology of D. M. Baille," Scottish Journal of Theology 11 (Mar 1958), 3. Hick's current rejection of Chalcedonian Christology does not really affect this statement. He simply no longer agrees that Chalcedon is true.

[11]On these terms in general see R. V. Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon (London: SPCK, 1961), 138-39; Richard Sturch, The Word and the Christ (Oxford: Oxford University

Defining these terms is very difficult. John MacQuarrie explains:

> The first three of these are especially confusing, for not only did their meaning vary, worse still, these meanings overlapped. Thus each of these three terms could and did have at least three distinct meanings, and any one of the three terms could and sometimes did bear any one of the three meanings! . . . But the variant meanings must obviously have been resonating in their [Chalcedonian Fathers] minds, and this, I believe, was no bad thing, for it introduces into the definition an element of flexibility in interpretation and delivers us from a frozen rigidity.[12]

The problem was compounded when these Greek terms were translated into Latin. For example, the Latin (Western Church) equivalent of hypostasis is substantia. When the Western Christians heard the Eastern Church speak of three hypostaseis of God they misunderstood it to mean three separate divine substances. Likewise, the Greeks misunderstood the Latins to mean a modalistic concept of God when they spoke of one substantia.[13] Some scholars have found these terms to be the equivalent to Aristotelian substances.[14]

Press, 1991), 269-74; John Macquarrie, "Foundation Documents of the Faith III.: The Chalcedonian Definition," The Expository Times 91 (Dec 1979), 69-70; James Moulder, "Is a Chalcedonian Christology Coherent?," Modern Theology 2 (Jul 1986), 287-89; Runia, The Present-day Christological Debate, 103-5; and esp. Grillmeier, Christ is Christian Tradition, vol 1, passim.

[12]MacQuarrie, "Foundation Documents of the Faith: III. The Chalcedonian Definition," 69-70.

[13]Gerald O'Collins, Christology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 179.

[14]Moulder, "Is a Chalcedonian Christology Coherent?", 287-89; Diogenes Allen, Philosophy for Understanding Theology (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 93-106.

The following table may help bring some of this together:

Table 1.--Primary Chalcedonian Terms

Aristotle	Chalcedon	Latin	English
Primary Substance	Hypostasis[a]	Substantia	Individual
	Prosopon[b]	Persona	Person
Secondary Substance	Ousia[c]	Substantia	Being; Substance
	Physis[d]	Natura	Nature
New Testament References: [a] II Cor 9:4, 11:17; Heb 1:3, 3:14, 11:1 [b] II Cor 1:11, I Thess 2:17 [c] Lk 15:12, 13 [d] James 3:7; I Peter 1:4			

The table shows how easy it would be to use the terms interchangeably. The English definitions are by no means exhaustive. The following distinctions will be observed based on their use in the Chalcedonian Creed. Ousia is found in two instances in the compound word homoousias. Its two occurrences parallel each other. "Homoousias with the Father" and "homoousias with us in manhood." We understand this to mean that Jesus has the essential properties of both deity and humanity.[15] "Physis" is that complex of attributes which constitutes the divine or human nature. Hence, as used here, it is synonymous with substance. The creed continues by asserting that the two natures coalesce in one "prosopon" and

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[15]"A property *P* is an *essential* property of an object x iff x could not exist and lack *P*, that is, as they say, iff x has *P* at every world at which x exists." Graeme Forbes, "In Defense of Absolute Essentialism," in Midwest Studies in Philosophy, vol 11 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 3.

one "hypostasis." Here too, then, we have two words used interchangeably. Sturch notes, "In general, though, *ὑπόστασις* seems most often to refer to the whole entity."[16] Hypostasis answers the question "who is it?" and physis answers the question "what is it?".

Contemporary theology and philosophy have a growing intolerance for a substance metaphysic. Process and Functional Christologies agree that the notion of "substance" is Hellenistic, static, and inappropriate to express a relevant Christology.[17] Clark shares this contempt, "The term *substance* must be totally discarded."[18] Hick has said, "The main feature of the Nicene and Chalcedonian formulae that renders them unacceptable to-day is their central reliance on the category of substance."[19] A full-orbed defense of

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[16]Sturch, The Word and The Christ, 273. Timothy W. Bartel, "Like Us in all Things, Apart from Sin?," Journal of Philosophical Research 16 (1990-91), 26. "Chalcedon . . . adopted the Alexandrians' use of *hypostasis* and *prosōpon*--it decreed that from now on, these terms were to denote the ultimate metaphysical subject of the Incarnation. . ."

[17]Runia declares, "Nearly all alternative Christologies opt for a functional Christology over against an ontological Christology." The Present-day Christological Debate, 95. Erickson defines a functional Christology as "an approach to the person of Christ which emphasizes what he did rather than what he is." Erickson, The Word Became Flesh, 216. For an excellent survey and critique of both Functional and Process Christologies see Erickson's volume chapters 9 and 10 respectively.

[18]Clark, The Incarnation, 28.

[19]John Hick, "Christology at the Cross Roads," in Prospect for Theology, ed. F. G. Healey (Great Britain: James Nisbet & Co., 1966), 150. He continues, "substance thinking

substance cannot be done here. An increasing number of scholars are, however, recognizing the importance of substance in philosophy in general and Christology in particular.[20] Furthermore, Chalcedon is not so severely damaged by modern objections to substance. The terms "person" and "nature" as used by Chalcedon do not necessitate belief in a particular metaphysical system. Bernard Lonergan states:

> The distinction between persons and nature is added to state what is one and the same and what are not one and the same. The person is one and the same; the natures are not one and the same. While later developments put persons and natures in many further contexts, the context of Chalcedon needs no more than heuristic concepts. What is a person or hypostasis? It is in the Trinity what there are three of and in the Incarnation what there is one of. What is a nature? In the Trinity it is what there is one of and in the Incarnation it is what there are two of.[21]

But a heuristic use is not the same as using it for whatever one pleases. Gregory of Nazianzus said:

> God is three in regard to distinctive properties, or subsistences [*hypostases*], or, if you like, persons [*prosôpa*]: for we shall not quarrel about the names, as

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is not only out of fashion: it has the tendency positively to mislead," 151.

[20]In philosophy see D. W. Hamlyn, Metaphysics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 60-84; and Richard J. Connell, Substance and Modern Science (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1988). In Christology see D. M. MacKinnon, "'Substance' in Christology: A Cross-Bench View," in Christ, Faith and History, ed. S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 279-300; and E. L. Mascal, Theology and the Gospel of Christ (London: SPCK, 1977), 121-25.

[21]Bernard Lonergan, "Dimensions of Meaning," in Collection, ed. F. E. Crowe (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1967), 259.

long as the terms lead to the same conception.[22] Chalcedon provides the parameters which guard the exploration of the meaning of the Incarnation.

The language of Chalcedon may be vague or ambiguous but it is not incomprehensible.[23] Its ambiguity is a strength and allows for flexibility in later formulations which desire to maintain traditional terminology.

Is the "One Person" of Chalcedon The Logos of God?

The identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the Logos of God lay at the core of the doctrine of the incarnation. It is the assertion that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity is the same person as Jesus of Nazareth. Morris accurately distinguishes between saying "Jesus is God" and "Jesus is God the Son."[24] The latter is the claim of orthodoxy, not the former. But this assumes the ontological reality of a preexistent person.

The Preexistence of Christ

Our second question is does the Chalcedonian creed

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[22]Henry Bettenson, ed., The Later Christian Fathers, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 118.

[23]Copi, Introduction to Logic, 134. A term is *ambiguous* in a given context when it has two distinct meanings and the context does not make clear which one is intended. On the other hand, a term is *vague* when there exist 'borderline cases' such that it cannot be determined whether the term applies to them or not.

[24]Thomas V. Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 21.

teach that the person of the Incarnate Jesus is numerically the same as the pre-existent Logos? The notion of pre-existence needs to be carefully understood. The orthodox doctrine of pre-existence does not mean that Jesus' *humanity* existed prior to his birth but that the divine Logos (the second Person of the Holy Trinity) existed prior to the birth of Jesus. O'Collins expresses it best,

> First, Chalcedon did not say Jesus *tout court* was/is consubstantial with us, but rather he is consubstantial with us *in his humanity*. Any notion of the pre-existence of Jesus' humanity or human nature would be incompatible with Chalcedon. The pre-existence of the person who came to be named historically as Jesus is quite another issue. . . . But the doctrine of the eternal pre-existence, based on Chalcedon's teaching, addresses itself to Christ's *personal* pre-existence, and is not making blatantly false claims about the eternal pre-existence of his created humanity.[25]

Most important is that pre-existence has significance only if there is a single personal subject in Christ. If Christ is two persons pre-existence looses its significance since the situation obtains in every other parallel relationship. The Christian today is indwelt by the Son of God (Rom 8:10; Col 1:27) but we do not speak of the pre-existence of, say, Billy Graham. The reason is obvious. An indwelling is not an incarnation. Only with an identity of subject does pre-existence have significance. Jesus' pre-existence is clearly established by his self claims (John

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[25]O'Collins, Christology, 244. "personal pre-existence does not mean that Jesus eternally pre-existed qua *Jesus*" 243. The variant reading of Jude 5 ("Jesus" saved a people out of Egypt) does not jeopardize this view of pre-existence. Rather, it establishes it.

8:58; 17:5) and the New Testament motif of the "sending" of the Son (Gal 4:4).

The Question Addressed

This brings us to our primary question. Is the person of Jesus the same as the person of the Son of God, Second Person of the Holy Trinity? Clark denies this because the doctrine "requires two assumptions not found in the Creed of Chalcedon."[26] Clark's appeal here to Chalcedon must be understood to show the inconsistency of the Chalcedonian position rather than using Chalcedon as an authority. The first assumption is that it assumes the Logos takes the place of the ego of the humanity and secondly it "presupposes the humanity of Jesus, but denies its personality."[27] Thomas V. Morris gives the affirmative answer.

> The God-man is, according to orthodoxy, both fully human and fully divine, but at the same time more deeply or fundamentally divine than human. The Person bearing the two natures is an essentially divine Person.[28]

O'Collins is convinced that "Chalcedon clearly implies that the one *hypostasis* it confesses is a divine *hypostasis*."[29] The Orthodox scholar John Meyendorff is more cautious.

> While Chalcedon had insisted that Christ was indeed one in His personal identity, it did not clearly specify that the term hypostasis, used to designate this identity, also

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[26]Clark, The Incarnation, 22.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate, 52-53.

[29]O'Collins, Christology, 193.

designated the hypostasis of the pre-existing Logos.[30]

Yet while it may not "clearly specify" it Meyendorff recognizes that

> The hypostatic union implies also that the Logos made humanity *His* own in its totality; thus the Second Person of the Trinity was indeed the subject, or agent, of the *human* experiences, or acts, of Jesus.[31]

The Objections of Anthony Baxter

A vigorous opponent to this interpretation is Anthony Baxter.[32] Baxter argues that this "Subject Divine and Not Human" view favors a Cyrilline interpretation of Chalcedon. He offers six factors which should "prompt *forbearance* from making" such a judgment.[33] First, the *context* of Chalcedon is not pro-Cyrilline. Cyril had already established an agreement in the "Formula of Reunion." The impetus for Chalcedon was to "react against hard-line Alexandrian, pro-Cyrilline, tendencies."[34] Second, the absence of Cyril's favored terminology suggests the Fathers were not thinking in a Cyrilline fashion. Third, the "double *homoousios*" combined with a sharp distinction between natures are contrary to

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[30]John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, 2d ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 153.

[31]Ibid., 155.

[32]Anthony Baxter, "Chalcedon, and the Subject in Christ," The Downside Review 107 (Jan 1989): 1-21. I choose Baxter since he presents supporting argumentation. Clark merely asserts it.

[33]Ibid., 8.

[34]Ibid.

Cyril's "one nature" Christology. Fourth, the accepted reading in the creed of "*in* two natures" was a change from an earlier draft which read "out of two natures." The change demonstrates the desire to "express dissociation from this hard-line Cyrillism."[35] Fifth, the emphasis on *one hypostasis*, which is a Cyrilline feature, cannot be assumed to mean that that hypostasis is divine and not human. Finally, the critical phrase, *one and the same Son*, in no way suggests that the subject is exclusively divine.

Response to Baxter

Baxter has marshalled quite an offensive against the traditional interpretation. But, carefully considered, his case is not as convincing as it appears. Baxter's first point is his weakest. His presentation is highly selective of the available evidence. It is certainly true that Monophysitism was a problem for the church at the time. This does not negate, however, the continuing threat of Nestorianism. This is evidenced by the fact that when Leo's *Tome* was first read at Chalcedon it was objected to on the basis that it seemed to favor Nestorianism?[36] What's more, "the entire matter had to be sent into a commission for five days, so that the *Tome* of Leo might be compared to the writings of Cyril, and especially

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[35]Ibid., 10.

[36]Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon, 110, 245-53. Three passages, in particular, were selected as the basis for the objection and were later used by the Monophysites.

to his *Anathematisms*."[37] The comparison of Leo to Cyril is most significant as Patrick Gray explains:

> It was indeed complimentary to suggest that the bishop of Rome was living up to the reputation for orthodoxy of his see's founder, but it involved something more important than a compliment to compare Leo with Cyril the obvious meaning of those exclamations is that the bishops accepted and praised Leo *because* he taught the same thing as Cyril. Cyril was the test for christological orthodoxy, and Cyril alone.[38]

What of the missing Cyrilline expressions? Like anyone, Cyril had preferences in the language that he used to explain the Incarnation. That he was was not bound to these formulas and pet phrases should be clear from the fact that he was able to work out a compromise statement with John of Antioch in the Formula of Reunion. The Formula of Reunion reads:

> We confess, then, our Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, perfect God and perfect man, consisting of a rational soul and body, begotten of the Father before the ages as to his God-head, and in the last days the Same, for us and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin as to his manhood; the Same *homoousios* with the Father as to his Godhead, and *homoousios* with us as to his manhood. For there has been a union of two natures; wherefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord.
>
> In accordance with this thought of the unconfused union, we confess the holy Virgin to be 'Theotokos', because the divine Logos was incarnate and made man, and from the very conception united to himself the temple that was taken of her.
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> And with regard to the sayings concerning the Lord in the Gospels and Apostolic [writings], we know that theologians take some as common, as relating to one Person,

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[37]John Meyendorff, Christ in Easter Christian Thought (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975), 27.

[38]Patrick Gray, The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), 9.

> and others they divide as relating to two natures explaining those God-befitting in reference to the Godhead of Christ, and those lowly in reference to his manhood.[39]

Grillmeier comments that "[t]he events of the Union of 433 and the correspondence with the Antiochenes at all events show that Cyril knew an account of his own christology in terms which could match Antiochene language."[40] Furthermore, Cyril's thought and language could not have been entirely problematic because the Council accepted his Second Letter to Nestorius as de fide.[41] This letter contains the phrase "hypostatic union" three times.[42] Sellers observes that, "What Chalcedon did was to exclude any false interpretation of the Alexandrian formulas, but not the formulas themselves, provided they were rightly understood."[43]

Baxter's third point about the double homoousias and the sharp distinction between natures is difficult to see in light of Cyril's acceptance of the Formula of Reunion. Cyril did prefer to speak of "one incarnate nature" but he did not

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[39]Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon, 17-18.

[40]Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol 1, 480. See also Graham Gould, "Cyril of Alexandria and the Formula of Reunion," The Downside Review 106 (1988), 235-52.

[41]Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol 1, 486-87. "Cyril's second letter to Nestorius, however, was considered by the Fathers to be the official expression of the teaching of Nicea. . . . Of course only the agreement of its doctrine of the incarnation with the dogma of Nicea was defined, but this extended *de facto* to the doctrine of the unity of the subject in Jesus Christ described above."

[42]Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon, 213.

[43]Ibid.

understand this in a Eutychian sense.[44] He fully accepted the presence of two natures in Christ. He says,

> And so the one Lord Jesus Christ must not be divided up, as if there was a distinct man and a distinct deity. No, we say that Jesus Christ is one and the same, even though we recognise the difference of natures and keep them unconfused with each other. . . . we must not divide this into two, even if we can still name each of the two united entities separately.[45]

Baxter's fourth point is perhaps his strongest. But it will hardly sustain his thesis. Again, he gives only half the story. When John of Germanicia first voiced his suspicions of the phrase "out of two natures" the *majority* of bishops had received it as orthodox.[46] Upon the initial suggestion that the phrase should be examined the bishops

> declared that the statement was a 'definition of the orthodox', which pleased everyone; and when John of Germanicia again tried to speak, he was shouted down. 'Cast out the Nestorians', it was exclaimed; 'the definition is orthodox, and but yesterday satisfied all'; 'the Holy Spirit dictated the definition'; 'let it be subscribed at once'; 'he who will not sign it is a heretic.'[47]

This is hardly a group trying to distance itself from an Alexandrian outlook. The change to "in two natures" was

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[44]Cyril used the phrase as a synonym with hypostasis to emphasize the unity of Christ after the incarnation. See John A. McGuckin, St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 207-12.

[45]Cyril of Alexandria, "Scholia on the Incarnation," in St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy, trans. John McGuckin (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 307. See also Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon, 144-57.

[46]On Cyril's understanding of this phrase and the problem he had with "in two natures" see McGuckin, St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy, 355n6.

[47]Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon, 118.

agreed upon in the interest of peace. But McGuckin observes that what immediately follows "in two natures" is the famous four adverbs. Of those four, three come from Cyril. "And so, we unite the Word of God the Father to the holy flesh endowed with a rational soul, in an ineffable way that transcends understanding, without confusion, without change, and without alteration."[48] McGuckin believes this

> shows that the Chalcedonian commission constantly attempts to use his terms even in those critical instances where they were ordered not to. In this, Cyril stands out, unarguably, as the primary authority for the Chalcedonian decree, and this, I think, was the deliberate intention of those who framed it.[49]

Baxter's fifth point was that mention of one hypostasis does not entail that the "individual reality at issue is divine and is not human."[50] This will be combined with his last point. He believes the phrase "one and the same son" does not suggest an "exclusively divine reality is

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[48]Cyril of Alexandria, "First Letter to Succensus," in St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy, trans. John A. McGuckin (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 354.

[49]McGuckin, St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy, 239. R. A. Norris says, "If they made or allowed changes in his [Cyril's] Christological terminology, this reflected not a repudiation of his position, but an acknowledgement of ambiguities and imprecisions in his language. We might say that their loyalty to Cyril was firm but limited--limited to what they took to be the essential kernel of his teaching." "Toward a Contemporary Interpretation of the Chalcedonian *Definition*," in Lux in Lumine, ed. R. A. Norris (New York: Seabury Press, 1966), 66.

[50]Baxter, "Chalcedon, and the Subject in Christ," 10.

posited."[51] Meyendorff saw through this clouded thinking.

> Therefore, the council did not say that *the hypostasis of the union* was *the pre-existent hypostasis of the Logos*. In order to acquire a fully orthodox sense, the definition had to be read in a Cyrillian context, and this was certainly the way in which the majority of the council conceived it.[52]

Baxter fails to see that it is not the word "hypostasis" or the phrase "one and the same Son" alone that suggest the hypostasis is divine, rather it is *the entire context in which they find themselves and the way they function in the logic of the creed*. The context is a Cyrillian Christology which clearly held to the divine hypostasis as being the only subject in the incarnate Christ.[53]

The Impersonal Human Nature of Christ

Finally, does any of this suggest that the human nature of Christ was impersonal? This is by far the most controversial aspect of the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation. The reasoning behind it is fairly simple.

> The reasoning was: there are two natures and but one person; hence the two natures cannot both be personal in character. But this impersonality cannot apply to the divine nature, for it is in command. Ergo: it is the

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[51]Ibid., 11. Baxter's label of "exclusively divine" is subject to confusion. The orthodox doctrine is that the hypostasis is indeed divine but after the incarnation it is divine and human.

[52]Meyendorff, Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, 44.

[53]Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol 1, 476-77.

human nature which lacks personality.[54]

A two-person Christology was thought to be inadequate for a number of reasons. Most of these are fleshed out during the Nestorian controversy.[55] Three objections are paramount.

First, if the incarnation is simply the Logos indwelling a man then how does it differ from any other situation where the Logos dwells in a man?

The French theologian Jean Galot says:

> The real meaning of the Incarnation, considered in the One who became incarnate, was to realize the most profound union possible between divine and human nature. Now such a unity is achieved far more completely when it occurs within a single person.
>
> What kind of being would have consisted of two persons? Such a dichotomy would have permitted only a superficial unity, or produced a community rather than a single individual.[56]

Interestingly, Aquinas observes that a two-person union would not have differed from "the Holy Spirit's assumption of the form of the dove in which He appeared." (Matt 3:16)[57] But no

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[54]G. C. Berkouwer, The Person of Christ, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1954), 306.

[55]The question of whether Nestorius was Nestorian is not necessary to answer in order to see the problems with a two-person Christology. The problems would still exist regardless of Nestorius' views. For a helpful survey of opinions on Nestorius see Carl E. Braaten, "Modern Interpretations of Nestorius," Church History 32 (Sep 1963): 251-67; and Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol 1, 559-68.

[56]Jean Galot, The Person of Christ, trans. Angeline Bouchard (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1984), 62.

[57]Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, trans. Charles J. O'Neil (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), Book IV chap 37 para 9.

one says that the Holy Spirit has "become dove."[58]

The second objection is that all the predicates must be applied to a single person. Cyril states, "All the terms of the Gospels are to be referred to one Person, the one incarnate *hypostasis* of the Word."[59] The reason is two-fold. It follows the example of Scripture and it allows the work of Jesus to be that of God Himself. This brings us to the third reason.

The third and the most crucial reason was that the doctrine of the atonement required that God, and not a man, be the redeemer of the human race. If Jesus is only a man then only a man has died and our redemption is not real.[60] Cyril asks:

> For how could his body possibly give life to us if it were not the very own body of him who is Life? And how could it be that the 'blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin' (I John 1:7) if it was in reality only that of an ordinary man subject to sin?[61]

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[58]Ibid.

[59]Cyril of Alexandria, "Third Letter to Nestorius," in Christology of the Later Fathers, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 352.

[60]J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, rev ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1960), 318.

[61]Cyril of Alexandria, On the Unity of Christ, trans. John A. McGuckin (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 60. Wiles says this is the "mistake" upon which traditional Christianity rests. ". . . it was not unnaturally, yet nonetheless mistakenly, felt that the full divine character of redemption in Christ could only be maintained if the person and act of the redeemer were understood to be divine in a direct and special sense." Wiles, "Does Christology Rest on a Mistake?", 72.

These three issues combine to require a genuine incarnation with a divine person as the metaphysical subject.

It is critical to remember that the divine nature did not become incarnate but rather the Second *Person* of the Trinity who took to himself human nature. R. A. Norris says, ". . . to speak of the 'union' of two natures in Christ is to refer to the process by which the Word makes a particular human existence his own."[62] No where is this more clearly expressed than by Heinrich Heppe.

> In essentials all Reformed dogmaticians are agreed that the divinity of Christ is not really the divine nature (common to the three persons of the Trinity) but the person of the Logos, the Logos-determination of the Trinity, or the deity thought of under the personal determination of the Logos; and that the humanity of Christ is the human nature common to all human personalities, thought of in abstraction (and so not personally) but individually. Cf. e.g., Polan (VI, 17): 'When it is said that two natures, the divine and human, have been personally united in Christ, the expression is figurative. It is not strictly the nature but the person or subsistence of the Word existing eternally in the form or nature of God, that has assumed the human nature and united it to itself. Exactly as Jn. 1. 14 does not say, The divine nature became flesh, but The Word became flesh. . . . So when the human nature is said to be united in Christ to the divine nature, we are not to understand the divine nature considered absolutely and as it is common to Father, Son and H. Spirit. . . For to assume means to make one's own.[63]

What is an *impersonal* human nature? By now it should be fairly clear that the basic thought is meant to "emphasize

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[62]Norris, "Toward a Contemporary Interpretation of the Chalcedonian *Definition*," 70.

[63]Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1950), 414-15.

that Jesus was never a *mere* man--in other words, that as God and man together, he is not a split personality."[64] It is equally important to understand what is not meant.

First, it does not mean that Jesus lacked a human "personality." "Personality or character is--banally--what *characterizes* a person, a subject."[65] It is something *we* attribute to a person. People are described as nice, kind, mean or pugnacious. These are descriptions of behavior or personality. This Jesus certainly had.

Second, it does not mean that Jesus lacked any essential human attribute. Millard Erickson writes,

> Rather, we are attempting to avoid the idea that the humanity of Jesus was impersonal. The incarnation took place in a definite and specific and complete human being, Jesus, but that human being did not exist prior to the Incarnation.[66]

Erickson is equating impersonal with incomplete. The thought that an impersonal human nature implies that Christ is somehow incomplete confuses person with nature.

> Nature is what makes one human or not. Christ has a complete human nature. Therefore, Christ is completely human. . . . If the divine hypostasis, the Word, has all the qualities that constitute someone as a human--a human nature--then the Word, a divine hypostasis, is a human being, and fully so, period.[67]

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[64]Gerald E. Bray, "Can We Dispense with Chalcedon?" Themelios 3 (Jan 1978), 8.

[65]Williams, "'Person' and 'Personality' in Christology," 257.

[66]Erickson, The Word Became Flesh, 546n22.

[67]Daniel Helminiak, The Same Jesus (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986), 292n8.

Finally, a frequently mentioned misconception is debated among conservative scholars. Did Christ assume an individual human nature or human nature in general? The former position is stated by Norman Anderson:

> the concept of his 'impersonal' human nature should not be thought of as 'human nature in its generality', which would be a purely Platonic idea. The human nature Jesus was certainly individual, and had distinctive qualities and characteristics. What the doctrine means is that his human nature had no personal subsistence distinct from that of the Logos. . . the point at issue is simply that 'the human nature formed in and out of Mary did not for a moment exist by and for itself.'[68]

The latter position is represented by Richard Swinburne:

> Christ therefore could not have an individual human nature. His human nature must be universal, in no way peculiar to Christ--it is just a set of properties which he acquires. . . . The whole mess has been produced by forgetting that human nature, and certainly Christ's human nature, is a universal; what individuates him is something else.[69]

This debate demonstrates no inadequacy in the doctrine of an impersonal human nature. Rather, it shows that the concept can adequately fit into a couple of different metaphysical systems.

The impersonal human nature of Christ is not an incomplete human nature but a complete set of essential human attributes which is joined to a divine hypostasis. "Manhood is 'appropriated' by the Word in such a way that it may

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[68]Norman Anderson, The Mystery of the Incarnation (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 145. See also C. J. F. Williams, "A Programme for Christology," Religious Studies 3 (1968), 517-18.

[69]Richard Swinburne, The Christian God (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 213, 215.

properly be said to *belong* to him."[70] This sense of "belonging" or the human nature of Christ being "owned" by the Logos must not be overlooked. Christ indwells every believer, but the individual experiences are those of the individual believer and not of Christ. In Christ, however, the experiences of Jesus are those of the Logos of God by virtue of "His" ownership of a human nature. Every believer "belongs" to Christ (I Cor 3:23) but this does not have the same meaning as the Logos' human nature "belonging" to Him. The latter is a metaphysical ownership which permits the attributes of the human nature to be applied to the Logos in such a way that is not true of the relationship between Christ and the believer. Matthew 25:40 ("to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine . . . you did it to Me") and Acts 9:4 ("Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?") cannot be used to object to the uniqueness of the relationship argued for here. Both are expressions of solidarity. The Logos of God assumed the "mode of existence" of a human being.

> The person of the Logos, existing as God, in hypostatically uniting to himself a human nature, comes to exist as man. What the Logos is, God, and what the Logos becomes, man, in no way undergo change. What is new is the manner in which the person of the Logos exists. . . . Christ is one and the same person of the Logos existing in two different modes: as God and man.[71]

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[70]Norris, "Interpretation of the Chalcedonian *Definition*," 70.

[71]Thomas Weinandy, Does God Change? (Still River, Mass.: St. Bede's Publications, 1985), 55. For a different perspective of this notion of change see Meyendorff, Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, 213, who holds that immutability is

Athanasius agreed:

> and it became the Lord, in putting on human flesh, to put it on whole with the affections proper to it; that, as we say that the body was His own, so also we may say that the affections of the body were proper to Him alone, though they did not touch Him according to His Godhead. If then the body had been another's, to him too had been the affections attributed; but if the flesh is the Word's (for 'the Word became flesh'), of necessity then the affections also of the flesh are ascribed to Him, whose the flesh is.[72]

For Chalcedon and Cyril the thought is the same: Jesus is one person in two natures and it is the divine nature alone which possesses personhood.

> Nonetheless, neither the soul of Christ, nor the human Nous were, for Cyril, the ultimate locus of personhood. For him this was to be strictly reserved for the hypostasis of the Logos. The modern philosophical contexts wherein personhood is predominantly defined in terms of psychic emotional capacities (the ancient psychology's realm of the Soul) or in terms of intellectual judgement and consciousness (Nous), makes it particularly difficult for modern readers to realise that Cyril does not wish to reduce what he means by 'person' to these previously mentioned 'functions' of person.[73]

The question which arises is how is it possible to have all the essential attributes of humanity and yet not be a human person? Is some "thing" lacking in Christ's humanity which is present in us? Isn't an impersonal human nature

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a property of nature but not of the hypostatic existence of God "which did change when the Son of God 'became flesh.'"

[72]Athanasius, "Four Discourses Against the Arians," in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1978), 411.

[73]McGuckin, St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy, 206. Philip Schaff holds that the doctrine of anhypostasia is a leading idea of the Chalcedonian Creed. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, vol 3, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1910), 757.

docetic at its core? Has Chalcedon committed the church to a philosophically incoherent notion? These questions will wait no longer and are the focus of chapter three.

CHAPTER 3

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL OBJECTION

Christian theology contends that Jesus was fully and genuinely human. The problem is defining "human" and the increasing insistence that a human nature void of "personhood" is simply not human. "Is personhood not essential to full humanity?" asks Runia.[1] An impersonal human nature is considered by many as disguised docetism or, worse, a metaphysical mutation.

> All attempts to make this doctrine acceptable cannot annul the fact that in this doctrine the human nature of Christ is 'beheaded,' that is robbed of something essential: the person. . . . [Korff] discovers a certain form of Docetism which is radically in conflict with the picture of Christ as given in the Gospels. . . . 'One cannot separate the nature from the person. Human personality is an essential constituent of human nature. Hence 'anhypostasy' abolishes the true humanity of Jesus, his believing and praying human ego, the truth of his being tempted--the Logos cannot be tempted.'[2]

Clark asks, "How can a human consciousness, mind, heart and will not be a human person? . . . The creeds and the theologians assert 'a true man' and their explanations deny it."[3] He argues that the phrase "like us in all things" in

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[1]Runia, The Present-day Christological Debate, 107.

[2]Berkouwer, The Person of Christ, 307. Berkouwer's discussion, while dated, is still one of the best.

[3]Clark, The Incarnation, 68.

the Chalcedonian creed is contradicted by everything that follows "because it denies that Christ was a human person. Obviously something that is not a human person at all cannot be 'in all things like unto us.'"[4]

The majority of contemporary Christologies emphasize the humanity of Christ as their non-negotiable premise.[5] The problem is defining what is meant by "human nature." For some the agnostic state of affairs is reason enough to leave the subject alone and to label all attempts as mere speculation. In chapter one we argued that the inability to formulate precise definitions is insufficient reason to preclude intelligent discourse.

> But the mere fact that we cannot *define* human nature, or divine, does not mean that we cannot speak of it. We cannot define 'man' or 'God', if by that is meant specifying all the qualities that are essential for a being to be man or God; yet we speak of them.[6]

The exploration of what constitutes human nature, while holding no promise of air-tight conclusions, is not a vain enterprise. In the defining human nature we should remember that the Incarnation itself may have something to contribute

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[4]Ibid., 5n4.

[5]Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, 189. "Where the statement that Jesus is God would contradict his real humanity, one would probably rather surrender the confession of his divinity than to doubt that he was really a man." Contrast Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate, 64. "The orthodox Christian can quite rationally argue that we are less sure that human nature essentially comprises properties incompatible with a divine incarnation than Christians are that Jesus was God Incarnate."

[6]Sturch, The Word and the Christ, 135.

to the definition. Indeed, this is the crux of Morris' argument as he seeks to define human nature "with certain presuppositions or controls from . . . the Incarnation".[7]

Christological Methodologies

Before proceeding to the question of human nature something should be said regarding the two main competing methodologies of Christological study. A Christology "from above" begins with the divinity of Christ. A Christology "from below" begins with the humanity of Jesus. Wolfhart Pannenberg is currently the most prominent defender of the former and Emil Brunner is frequently cited as an example of the latter.[8] Chalcedon is usually seen as Christology "from above." The discussion may appear as little more than a minor in-house dispute with rather innocuous consequences. This "appearance" could not be more wrong. David Wells, speaking forcefully for a Christology "from above", pictures the Christ produced "from below" as nothing more than "a larger-than-life religious figure, the perfection of what many others already experience."[9] He argues that Christology "from below" is not as contentless as we are lead to believe. He portrays the procedure of Christology "from below" as follows:

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[7]Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate, 64.

[8]Pannenberg, Jesus: God and Man. Emil Brunner, The Mediator, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947).

[9]David Wells, The Person of Christ (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1984), 172.

> It often takes on the form of orthodoxy, insisting that Christ must, first and foremost, be said to be fully human. The word *human* is then transformed into a synonym for twentieth-century, secular modernity. It is then assumed that to be human, such a christ must be as fallible as we are, as confused, as filled with doubts, as unsure about the future, as agnostic about the purposes and plans of God, as diffident about the possibilities of knowing God, and as baffled about ethical norms and the possibility of absolutes. To present a Christ who is the exegesis of God's character and plans, who acts and speaks as God, who knows from whence he came and why, and who did on the cross what only God could do is, it is argued, to present a Christ who is not human![10]

To be quite fair a similar criticism could be constructed against Christology "from above." In parallel fashion it would look like this: (Changes are indicated in italics.)

> It often takes on the form of orthodoxy, insisting that Christ must, first and foremost, be said to be fully *divine*. The word *divine* is then transformed into a synonym for *fourth-century, Greek Hellenism*. It is then assumed that to be *divine*, such a christ must be as *perfect as the most exalted concept of God conceived*, as *sure* about the future, as *confident* about the purposes and plan of God, as *certain* about the possibilities of knowing God, and *pontifical* about ethical norms and the possibility of absolutes. To present a Christ who is the *exemplar of Man's character and dignity*, who acts and speaks *with humility*, who knows *the frailty of the human condition, who genuinely suffers and feels the deepest emotions*, and who did on the cross what only a *man so possessed and dedicated to the purposes of* God could do is, it is argued, to present a Christ who is not *divine*!

Both methods can be portrayed to exclude the truth of the other. More responsible treatments will recognize that the method in itself need not be drawn quite within these parameters.

Erickson draws a parallel between this issue and the faith-reason dichotomy. The approach "from above" is

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[10]Ibid., 173-74.

fideistic emphasizing faith. The approach "from below" is Thomistic emphasizing reason.[11] Scripture employs both methods effectively joining both without ignoring the other.

Erickson's model starts with the kerygma of the early church. The content of that kerygma "serves as a hypothesis to interpret and integrate the data supplied by inquiry into the historical Jesus." Two problems may be noted. First, it is still fundamentally "from above" since it "starts with the kerygma." Erickson's starting point tips the scales towards a Christology "from above." Secondly, it may be unfair to characterize the models as fideistic and Thomistic. This is especially true of the characterization of the "from above" approach as fideistic since Erickson is referring to the form as "expounded by Brunner and other existentialist theologians."[12] But why should this form be chosen as the paradigm example of a Christology "from above"?

A closer parallel is provided in the contemporary inerrancy debate.[13] Advocates of inerrancy are accused of ignoring the phenomena of Scripture in favor of deductive reasoning from didactic passages of Scripture. An inductive

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[11]Erickson, Christian Theology, 673.

[12]Ibid., 673.

[13]R. C. Sproul, "The Case for Inerrancy: A Methodological Analysis," in God's Inerrant Word: An International Symposium of the Trustworthiness of Scripture, ed. John W. Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1979), 242-61; and Paul Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," in Inerrancy, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 267-304.

examination of the phenomena of Scripture, it is argued, will reveal a lower view of Scripture than is typically held by modern evangelicals under the rubric "inerrancy." The emphasis on the phenomena of Scripture is the approach "from below" and the other, emphasizing the teaching passages, "from above."[14] Recent Christological discussions combine the two methodologies. Sturch calls it a "Christology 'from the middle'" and Erickson calls his model "Augustinian."[15] This eclectic method is more promising. Carson notes:

> The method is found in the natural sciences as well as in the humanities and constitutes a major part of theory formation and justification. In the views of most theorists, adduction (as I shall call it) is not so much separate from deduction and induction as a category that retains both while going beyond them to describe the creative thought, the sudden links and the establishment of paradigms that account for the evidences as accumulated and understood to that point.[16]

The two methods may be seen as addressing two different questions. Christology "from above" is an ontological perspective. Christology "from below" is an epistemological perspective. Both methods have the same source of data: the Scriptures. When the doctrine is

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[14]Clark Pinnock uses this terminology. Clark Pinnock, The Scripture Principle (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), 87.

[15]Sturch, The Word and the Christ, 117. Erickson, Christian Theology, 673. See also Henry, The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth, 75-78; Helminiak, The Same Jesus, 37-46; Runia, The Present-day Christological Debate, 97-100; and Oden, The Word of Life, 204-7.

[16]D. A. Carson, "Three Books on the Bible: A Critical Review," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 26 (Sep 1983), 343.

formulated and explained *in toto* we begin with what is ontologically true of the doctrine which is the pre-existent person of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.[17]

Made Like His Brethren In All Things

Hebrews proclaims that Jesus "had to be made like His brethren in all things." The phrase recurs in Christological discussions as a kind of "rod of discipline" to those who want to see any distinction whatsoever between Christ's humanity and our own. Clark complains that if Christ is not a human person (separate from the Logos) then He is not like us in all things.[18] James Moulder argues that Thomas Morris' distinction between "fully" and "merely" human makes it "impossible to conclude that Jesus and Mary are *homoousios* with each other."[19] Karl Barth thought to do justice to Christ becoming "flesh" it must mean He was "exactly like us even in our opposition to Him [God]."[20] Paul Van Buren rejects the virgin birth on the grounds that a "factual" interpretation "would indeed threaten the doctrine of the full manhood of Jesus specified in the

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[17]Erickson, The Word Became Flesh, 625-26; and Thomas G. Weinandy, In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh: An Essay in the Humanity of Christ (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 15-16.

[18]Clark, The Incarnation, 5n4.

[19]James Moulder, "The Humanity of Jesus," Theology 88 (May 1985), 218.

[20]Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol 1.2, trans. G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), 151.

Christology of Chalcedon."[21] These observations assume that everything which is true of us *must* be true of Christ in order for him to be genuinely human. But as many have pointed out, we are rather poor examples of humanity!

> But none of us are humanity as God intended it to be, or as it came from his hand. Humanity was spoiled and corrupted by the sin of Adam and Eve. Consequently, we are not true human beings, but impaired, broken-down vestiges of essential humanity, and it is difficult to imagine this kind of humanity united with deity. . . . We should define humanity, not by integrating our present empirical observations, but by examining the human nature of Jesus, for he most fully reveals the true nature of humanity.[22]

No one today is walking on water (Matt 14), multiplying loaves and fishes (Matt 14), calming storms with only a word (Matt 8), turning water into wine (John 2), or raising the dead (John 11). These events alone mark a significant difference between Jesus and people we encounter today. Furthermore, what Van Buren and others like him seem to forget is that if to be human one must be born via the process of natural human procreation then by definition Adam and Eve are not human.[23]

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[21]Paul Van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1963), 165.

[22]Erickson, Christian Theology, 736. See also Russell F. Aldwinckle, More Than a Man: a Study in Christology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 110. "To know what true humanity means, we must look at the humanity of our Lord. When we do this, we discover that His humanity is not necessarily an exact duplication of our own."

[23]This argument obviously rests on the literal historicity of Adam and Eve. As Hick observes, "On the other hand, if there was no pre-historic Adam, created by God *ex nihilo*, no such amendment [of humanity] is needed." John Hick, "The Logic of God Incarnate," Religious Studies 25 (Dec 1989), 413.

Jesus' virgin birth cannot be used, therefore, to nullify his humanity. As Bray observes:

> The fact that his [Jesus'] Father is 'foreign' in some sense to us, does not exclude him from full participation in our life as one of us; it means rather that we must broaden our horizons to accommodate someone who is both like us and different at the same time.[24]

The writer of Hebrews affirms that Jesus was fully human. But notice how the writer qualifies "all things:" "that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest *in things pertaining to God*, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Jesus had to be made like us in so far as he was to fulfill his mission. Whatever was required of him to fulfill his work to that extent he must become human. Part of that work was to die for the sins of humanity. He, therefore, had to "share in flesh and blood . . . that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death" (Heb 2:14). Hebrews does not say Jesus was like us in every facet of our being. This is simply impossible. He was a Jewish man born in the 1st century A.D. In that respect he is unlike the European or North American Indian. He never knew the problems of growing old or suffering from multiple sclerosis. The "all things" of Hebrews 2:17 is not so much a commentary on his **metaphysical make-up per se but rather on the *result* of his** being made like us, namely, he is able to be our high priest.[25]

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[24]Bray, "Can We Dispense with Chalcedon?," 8.

[25]The passage seems to indicate that Jesus can now sympathize in some way which he could not prior to the Incarnation. See Grudem, Systematic Theology, 542n13.

Is Something Missing from Christ's Human Nature?

Clark asks:

> What in addition to will and intellect is necessary to make a human body a human person? The human 'nature' of Christ is supposed to have lacked an essential characteristic of a person. What was it that he did not have? How can he be a true man without being a human person?[26]

Galot frames it this way:

> Why is this nature not a human person? This is a particularly delicate problem, since it requires us to determine the formal constituent of the person in such a way that when we affirm the absence of this constituent in Christ's human nature we take away none of its perfection.[27]

Before embarking on the journey of answers we may ask if the question itself makes any unnecessary assumptions. The immediate answer is yes. Must we assume that the human nature must *lack* something in order for it not to be a human person? The question assumes from the outset that the mere assemblage of the constituent "parts" of human nature will in themselves provide the necessary and sufficient conditions to constitute a human person regardless of any other factors. This is precisely the opposite of Duns Scotus who held that for a person to exist the human nature must fulfill a "twofold negation." If a human nature is *not* actually sustained by an divine extrinsic suppositum and is *not* naturally inclined toward such sustainment it is a human person. No better summary is there than that by Freddoso. We quote at length.

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[26]Clark, The Incarnation, 17.

[27]Galot, The Person of Christ, 12.

> So a human person is just an individual human nature which satisfies the twofold negation. However, as emphasized above, it is a serious philosophical blunder to construe these negations as entities or *res* which count, along with body and soul, as proper parts of a human person. To the contrary, the negations are simply metaphysical conditions instantiated by each individual human nature which is a human person. Thus, when the Son of God assumes an individual human nature, no proper part of that nature or any human person is destroyed. That is why Christ can correctly be said to have a complete human nature and thus to be truly a man. His human nature, just like every other, has as parts just a body and an intellective soul. In the Incarnation God simply brings it about by a special act that a certain individual human nature, exactly similar to every other in its ontological constitution and intrinsic inclinations, fails to satisfy the metaphysical conditions required for it to be a human person.[28]

The majority of Christian theologians and philosophers will shy away from admitting any lack in the human nature of Christ. I suggest this thought lies at the very heart of the problem for someone like Clark. If Christ possess all the necessary "parts" of human nature and they together, in every other circumstance, are sufficient to constitute a human person then what prevents it from being a human person in Christ? This is especially true for Clark.

Clark's Definition of Person

Clark defines person as a complex of propositions.

> Therefore, since God is Truth, we shall define *person*, not as a composite of sensory impressions, as Hume did, but, rejecting with him the meaningless term *substance*, we **shall define person as a composite of truths.** A bit more exactly, since all men make mistakes and believe some falsehoods, the definition must be a composite of propositions. **As a man thinketh in his** (figurative)

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[28]Alfred J. Freddoso, "Human Nature, Potency, and the Incarnation," Faith and Philosophy 3 (Jan 1986), 33.

heart, so is he. A man *is* what he *thinks*.[29]

Notice the definition is univocally true for both God and man.[30] For Clark the human *mind* is equated with human *person*. "Each one [human person] is an individual complex. Each one is his mind or soul."[31] Of the Trinity Clark says,

> Though they are equally omniscient, they do not all know the same truths. Neither the complex of truths we call the Father nor those we call the Spirit, has the propositions, 'I was incarnated.' This proposition occurs only in the Son's complex. Other examples are implied. The Father cannot say, 'I walked from Jerusalem to Jericho.' Nor can the Spirit say, 'I begot the Son.' Hence the Godhead consists of three Persons, each omniscient without having precisely the same content.[32]

Therefore, if Christ has a human mind, a complex of propositions distinct from that of the Logos, then we have by definition a human person in the fullest sense of the word.[33] Clark's definition bristles with theological and philosophical problems.

We may start with some problems as it relates to God and then examine the problems it poses for anthropology. Clark holds strongly to the view that God's knowledge is

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[29]Clark, The Incarnation, 54.

[30]See also Clark, The Trinity, 106-7.

[31]Clark, The Incarnation, 55.

[32]Ibid., 54-55.

[33]Contrast this with Morris' caution with reference to his "two-minds" view of the Incarnation. "Of course, to avoid the Nestorian heresy, we must use the word 'mind' here to denote something a person *has* rather than simply something that a person is." Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate, 102n19.

propositional in nature. If this is wrong the whole "complex" collapses. William P. Alston has argued that God's knowledge may not be propositional.[34] The propositional character of our knowledge "stems from our limitations."[35] That is, we are unable to see the complete nature of things in their entirety. We see only certain aspects of the greater whole. Furthermore, "we need to isolate separate propositions in order to relate them logically, so as to be able to extend our knowledge inferentially."[36] Neither of these is true of God. He can grasp the concrete whole fully and his knowledge is already complete without needing any extension. Clark was aware of this alternative. In Faith and Saving Faith he says:

> It is hard to credit the idea that truth can be non-propositional. The single word *cat* is neither true nor false. The proposition, 'this cat is black,' may be true; but how can a subject minus a predicate be true all alone by itself? Yet God is the truth, and his mind, his omniscience, is the totality of all truths.[37]

We might ask is the injunction "Praise the Lord!" true? Are the words Christ spoke on the cross "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" true? The question is not asking is it true that Christ said it but is the question true. The answer to both of these is that they are not propositions. John

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[34]William P. Alston, "Does God Have Beliefs?" Religious Studies 22 (1986): 291.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Gordon Clark, Faith and Saving Faith (Jefferson, Md.: The Trinity Foundation, 1983), 19.

Frame explains:

> A proposition is a thought that can be used to make a factual assertion. It is 'proposed' for consideration as to its factuality. The sentence 'The window is open' asserts a proposition; the sentence 'Is the window open?' does not. The proposition is not the sentence itself, but the thought behind it: 'The window is open' and 'La fenêtre est ouverte' express the same proposition. . . . A man knows a certain number of propositions, but God knows many more. Therefore, the main difference between God's knowledge and ours is 'quantitative.'[38]

Though Clark believed God's knowledge was propositional he did not believe that God's thinking was discursive. Rather it was entirely innate and immediate. "But some of our knowledge also is innate and therefore immediate. The difference is that all of God's knowledge is innate and immediate. Indeed, God's knowledge is God; and we are our limited knowledge."[39] The problem seems to be that the distinction between deity and humanity is blurred. Clark's emphasis that God is his knowledge and we are our knowledge invites someone to ask in what way do God and man differ. In the "Clark controversy" Clark argued that the only difference between God's knowledge and man's knowledge is one of quantity not quality. But if the difference is merely quantity and both are comprised of

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[38]John M. Frame, Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1995), 98-99. Frame provides a nice summary of the rivalry between Clark and Van Til. It has become known as the "Clark Controversy" and is covered by Frame in a chapter by that title.

[39]Clark, The Trinity, 78. Later Clark asks, "If God does not think in propositions, where did all the Biblical propositions come from?" 128. Clark does not explain how God "thinks" in propositions and yet His knowledge is entirely innate and immediate.

knowledge in the same sense of the word then is there no ontological difference between God and man?[40] Clark would demur. God is eternal, we are not. God is omnipotent, we are not. God is omnipresent, we are not. Some qualitative difference must exist. Frame has done the most to clarify in what sense there is a "qualitative" difference between man's and God's knowledge.[41] The traditional answer on a broader scale is that God's *nature* is different from man's.[42] For Clark there is no distinction between God's nature and His knowledge and so we are back to square one.

There are problems with defining man as a complex of propositions. Clark admits that "human beings are mutable:

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[40]Frame has an interesting footnote expressing the same concern. "there are pantheistic implications (doubtless contrary to his intention) in some of Clark's later writings. First, he asserted that there must be an identity rather than a correspondence between idea and object in human knowledge . . . What does this say about human knowledge of God? Second, he argued that a person is a composite of propositions and that some human propositions are identical with God's." Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought, 146n24. Earlier Clark said "And insofar as man knows anything he is in contact with God's mind. Since, further, God's mind is God, we may legitimately borrow the figurative language, if not the precise meaning, of the mystics and say, we have a vision of God." Gordon H. Clark, Christian View of Men and Things (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1952), 321. But if those thoughts we have *are us* then are we really seeing God or just ourselves? Or, again, are God and man essentially one?

[41]John Frame, The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), 22-40.

[42]Clark was a firm advocate in the doctrine of divine simplicity. This writer's sympathies lie more with those who see God's nature as not identical with him. See Alvin Plantinga, Does God have a Nature? (Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 1980).

Their thoughts or minds change."[43] If this is true what is the basis for identity through time? If I am my thoughts and my thoughts change am I the same person after my mind has changed? Wouldn't I be, by definition, a different person?[44] Is there, perhaps, some set of innate thoughts which could provide continuity? In another context Mortimer Adler asks:

> Do Plato and Descartes think that all human souls have the same set of innate ideas, or does each human soul have a set that is distinctively its own? On the first alternative, all human souls would be members of the same species and would have to differ individually from one another, but how? On the second alternative, each soul would differ in species from every other, as angels do, but, then, what becomes of the notion of a single human species?[45]

According to Clark, God is the answer to this problem.

> So we say, God knows, has the idea of, defines man, Adam, and Peter. God's knowledge is clear and distinct. He does not confuse one definition with another; he does not confuse Adam with Peter, or either one with the definition of man.[46]

Since God's thoughts never change then there is in his mind a fixed number of propositions which defines each human person.

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[43]Clark, The Trinity, 106.

[44]Gary R. Habermas and J. P. Moreland, Immortality: The Other Side of Death (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 36. "Can I gain and lose mental properties and be literally the same person?" Michael J. Loux, "Particulars and Their Individuation," in Universals and Particulars, ed. Michael J. Loux (New York: Anchor Books, 1970), 191. "If a material body or person just is a set of characteristics, then any alteration in these will simply result in a different entity."

[45]Mortimer J. Adler, The Angels and Us (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co, 1982), 162.

[46]Gordon H. Clark, The Biblical Doctrine of Man (Jefferson, Md,: The Trinity Foundation, 1984), 70-71.

This seems to conflict with what Clark said elsewhere. Remember, Clark said God was a composite of truths but because people "make mistakes and believe some falsehoods, the definition must be a composite of propositions. As a man thinketh in his (figurative) heart, so is he. A man *is* what he *thinks*."[47] Here's the problem: is a human person ultimately defined by what *she* thinks or what *God* thinks? If God has an idea of Clark then presumably that thought is entirely true. Why then not define a human person as *a composite of truths known always and only by God*?[48] The falsehoods that we believe do not alter God's idea of us and so do not affect our definition as true persons.

Christian philosophers should be prepared to alter their philosophical concepts when they conflict with orthodox Biblical teaching.[49] Clark forms his concept of person and then interprets the Incarnation in light of that definition regardless of its consequences. Notice the contrast with another Christian philosopher,

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[47]Clark, The Incarnation, 54.

[48]Robert Reymond notes that the definition of person would have to include the future world as well. "Consequently, since all the 'returns' (propositions) are not in it follows that Robert L. Reymond is unknowable to himself and to everyone else except God." The Justification of Knowledge (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1976), 110.

[49]See Marilyn McCord Adams' discussion of Ockham's Christology. She concludes that "Ockham allowed theology to modify his Aristotelian ontology in some predictable and some surprising ways." "Relations, Inherence and Subsistence: or, Was Ockham a Nestorian in Christology?," Nous 16 (1982), 62.

Chalcedon also declared that Christ had a 'reasonable soul' (ψυχῆ λογικῆ) and by this it seems to have meant an acquired 'human soul'. But the Council could not have meant by this that there were in Christ both a divine and a human soul in my sense of 'soul'. For that would have been to say that Christ was two individuals, a doctrine to which Chalcedon was greatly opposed. Rather in the affirmation that Christ had a 'reasonable soul', 'soul' is to be understood in an Aristotelian sense; and so the affirmation is to be understood as saying that Christ had a human way of thinking and acting, as well as his divine way.[50]

Swinburne's concept of soul is a Platonic one (as is Clark's). Rather than force his definition as the only acceptable one onto Chalcedon he recognizes Chalcedon is using terminology in a way different from his own. Clark would rather disparage the Chalcedonians as ignorant and thoughtlessly engaging in subjects that were for them too deep and too complex.

Finally, Clark's use of Scripture is also problematic. Clark asserts that all knowledge comes from Scripture. Therefore, if the definition of person fails to find Biblical support it cannot be true. Clark appeals to two main avenues of evidence. Scripture says "God is Truth" and since truth can only be propositional God is propositional truth. Secondly, Proverbs 23:7 explicitly says "a man is what he thinks." Clark never does much in the way of detailed exegesis. He largely quotes passages with the intent that the reading of the passages will manifestly support his position. In support of the proposition that God is truth he cites Deut 32:4; Psalm 22:5,10; 31:5; 108:4; Is 25:1; 65:16; John 1:14;

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[50]Swinburne. The Christian God, 196-97.

4:23-24; 14:6; 15:26; 16:13 and I John 5:6.[51] Clearly, God is truth. This is not denied. He does not seem to appreciate, or recognize, the other ways that Scripture employs the word truth.[52] Clark also cites passages which speak of God as a God of knowledge. The problem is Clark's narrow selectivity. Scripture describes God as light and love neither of which can be reduced to propositions. A favorite passage for Clark is Prov 23:7, "For as he thinks within himself, so is he." The context of this passage gives an entirely different understanding. The New International Version says, "Do not eat the food of a stingy man, do not crave his delicacies; for he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. 'Eat and drink,' he says to you, but his heart is not with you.[53] The translation of this verse is debated. The pivotal word is the Hebrew verb šā°ar. Kenneth Barker has suggested that the word "be given a new etymology, by relating it to Ugaritic t°r, and be assigned the meaning 'to serve food, put on a feast.'"[54] Even with this change Barker claims the sense of the passage would basically be the same. "[T]he point is

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[51]Clark, The Incarnation, 54.

[52]Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John, 293-96. Roger Nicole, "The Biblical Concept of Truth," in Scripture and Truth, ed. D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1983), 287-98.

[53]RSV, "for he is like one who is inwardly reckoning."

[54]Kenneth L. Barker, "Proverbs 23:7--'To Think' or 'To Serve Food'?" The Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society 19 (1989), 7.

still that it is *how* a host serves food *within himself* that reveals his character and motivation. Outwardly he may be serving a lavish feast, but inwardly he may be grudging every bite his guests take."[55] The passage will not support Clark's use.

This discussion of Clark's definition of person was intended to show two things. First, his definition of person is problematic and unhelpful. Furthermore, the Scriptural support is strained and unnecessarily restrictive in its selection of passages. Secondly, Clark's definition of person virtually requires the presence of two persons in the incarnation since he equates mind with person. In Clark's understanding the only way to avoid a two-person Christology would be to hold that there is but one mind present in Christ. If it is the divine mind of the Logos we have Docetism or Apollinarianism. If it is merely human we have some form of Adoptionism. Most evangelicals are not willing to go either route but prefer to see two minds in Christ.

A Truncated Humanity?

This leads us to our discussion proper of whether an impersonal human nature is a truncated humanity. Clark objects:

> Otherwise, if the Logos is a person and if the human Jesus is a person, Nestorianism is the result. Therefore the human nature of Christ is *impersonal*. This has become the commonly accepted view, but it involves a great

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[55]Ibid.

difficulty. Aside from the fact that for most people 'impersonal human nature' is an oddity, to say the least, the view oscillates between its tendency to become Nestorian and its equally clear tendency to become Apollinarian. If the human nature has no human will, it is hardly a human nature, and therefore the view reverts to Apollinarianism. But if the humanity of Jesus includes a human will and is thus a complete human being, we have Nestorianism again. Neither the ancient nor modern Christology has escaped this dilemma.[56]

Clark objects that "most people" think an impersonal human nature is an oddity. Is his own definition of person as a composite of propositions any less odd? He says himself, "Most people will find it queer. Most theologians will find it unacceptable. Well and good, let them formulate and propose a different definition."[57] Why is Clark's "queer" definition of person "well and good" but the "oddity" of an impersonal human nature a "great difficulty"? Its oddity is irrelevant to its veracity.

Clark's second point is not altogether clear. An impersonal human nature (right or wrong) simply cannot, by definition, *oscillate* between Nestorianism and Apollinarianism. Nestorianism holds that the human nature of Christ *is* a person and so is, therefore, contradictory to the doctrine of an impersonal human nature. The phrase is "anti-Nestorian in purpose."[58] If someone objects that it leans to Apollinarianism or is implicitly Apollinarian that is a

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[56]Clark, The Incarnation, 22.

[57]Ibid., 75.

[58]Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon, 345.

different and understandable charge. But an impersonal human nature in no manner leans or oscillates towards Nestorianism. The problem, once again, is that Clark cannot see how Jesus can have a "complete human nature" without this constituting a human person.

We shall now consider some definitions offered of an impersonal nature.

> 'an impersonal manhood' is an unfortunate phrase, which, anti-Nestorian in purpose, means no more than that the man hood had no independent existence; it does not mean that the manhood was deprived of its properties in its union with Godhead, but, as it implies, that these were exercised not separately but in the *hypostasis* of the Logos, who united the manhood to himself and made it his own.[59]

> The more refined view of this doctrine . . . argues that human nature is accorded its personal identity in the divine Word, by who it is assumed and to whom it is joined. This means that Christ's human nature was not 'impersonal,' but that, though fully human, it reached its personal completion in the divine Word because of the action of God in effecting a union with it. As such, it is 'in-personal.'[60]

> What the doctrine means is that his human nature had no personal subsistence distinct from that of the Logos; for if it had had a distinct 'personal' existence or entity of its own, then he would either have been two 'persons', in the modern understanding of personality, or he would have been no more than a man wholly 'possessed' or 'inspired' by God, as many affirm today.[61]

> With 'anhypostasy' is meant that the human nature of Christ cannot exist for a moment outside the Logos, while 'enhypostasy' indicates that the reality of the human nature is concretely that of the acting Lord. . . .

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[59]Ibid., 345. Notice the important phrase "made it his own."

[60]Wells, The Person of Christ, 177.

[61]Anderson, The Mystery of the Incarnation, 145.

'Impersonal' can then be used indeed without the connotation that some essential constituent of humanity is lacking in Christ.[62]

But what Christ's human nature lacks according to the early doctrine is not what we call personality. This the early writers called *individualitas*, and they never taught that Christ's human nature lacked this, but rather that this qualification actually belonged to the human being. *Personalitas* was their name for what we call existence or being. Their negative position asserted that Christ's human flesh in itself has no existence, and this was asserted in the interests of their positive position that Christ's flesh has its existence through the Word and in the Word, who is God Himself acting as Revealer and Reconciler.[63]

I continue to support a doctrine of *anhypostasia*--Jesus Christ was not a human person. . . . But to suggest that without being a human person Christ would not be fully human is to misunderstand the distinction between nature and person. Nature is what makes one human or not. Christ has a complete human nature. Therefore, Christ is completely human. . . . If the divine hypostasis, the Word, has all the qualities that constitute someone as human--a human nature--then the Word, a divine hypostasis, is a human being, and fully so, period.[64]

Above all, Jesus' human nature possessed no hypostasis of its own and for Cyril, as for a long time after him, this meant that the human nature of Jesus by itself was not an individual. Jesus became an individual only through the Logos. The Logos, which already was an independent hypostasis previously, assumed human nature at the incarnation, but not an individual man. . . . Precisely in this point, in the strength of this Christology, in its understanding of the Logos as the bearer of Jesus' self, its insurmountable weakness also resides: here Jesus could not be conceived as a real, individual man.[65]

Hence it follows that the human nature of Christ, separately considered, is impersonal. To this, indeed, it is objected that intelligence and will constitute

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[62]Berkouwer, The Person of Christ, 308 and 320.

[63]Barth, Church Dogmatics, 164.

[64]Helminiak, The Same Jesus, 292n8.

[65]Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, 290.

personality, and as these belong to Christ's human nature personality cannot be denied to it. A person, however, is a *suppositum intelligens*, but the human nature of Christ is not a *suppositum* or subsistence. To personality both rational substance and distinct subsistence are essential. The latter the human nature of Christ never possessed.[66]

It will be immediately noticed that while there is some similarity between these observations there is no unanimity. Indeed, some conflict of opinion is present. Pannenberg insists that Cyril's doctrine entails that Jesus cannot be conceived as a real individual man. Barth says this misunderstands what the early church writers meant. Three of the writers relate the doctrine specifically to the matter of independent existence. This seems to be a common thread. Anderson and Hodge speak of "no personal subsistence." But what does "independent existence" mean? In one sense no person exists completely independent from God.[67] If one understands subsistence in Suárezian terms as a "determinate mode of existing, namely existing as a substance, not inhering in a substance as an accident inheres in a substance," the notion of dependence is more clearly expressed.[68] The phrase continues to be used as if its meaning should be self evident. This is far from true. The expression does seem to fall back on the idea of something not inhering in another as an accident in a substance. Connell argues persuasively for

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[66]Hodge, Systematic Theology, vol 2, 391.

[67]Acts 17:28; Job 12:10; Dan 5:23; Jer 10:23

[68]Frederick Coplestone, A History of Philosophy, Book One, vol 3 (New York: Image Books, 1985), 369.

substance as defined as "that which exists in itself (or by itself) and not in another as in a subject."[69] Clark objects to the definition of substance as "that which is . . . and remains unchanged under all the varying phenomena of which it may be the subject" on the basis that it is a "blunder" to use the verb *to be* as anything other than a copula, and that nothing never changes except God (and the number two).[70] Clark is taking the definition to an extreme. Connell observes that "substance does not imply either unqualified permanence or an unqualified independence."[71] This permanence is nothing more than what Clark refers to when he says, "Recall that Paul on one occasion left his body for a time, yet he remained himself."[72] Here is an instance by Clark's own admission of continuity of identity through change.

The human nature of Christ then is a nature which does not exist by itself but in another. Were it to be a subject in its own right then it would be a separate independent person. In medieval language the human nature is sustained by a suppositum. But if substance is defined as that which exists by itself and not in another and Christ's human nature is a substance then how can it exist in another and still be

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[69]Connell, Substance and Modern Science, 13.

[70]Clark, The Incarnation, 40-41. See John 1:1 for a non-copula usage of the verb *to be*.

[71]Connell, Substance and Modern Science, 13.

[72]Clark, The Incarnation, 41.

called a substance? Doesn't it become by definition a property? Marilyn McCord Adams observes that Ockham in answering this judged "that philosophy had something to learn from orthodoxy about the true nature of created substances."[73] Ockham believed that God could cause a substance nature to be sustained by another. Thus we could say,

> And substance natures share with accidents the capability of being sustained by another suppositum. The only difference would be that in the normal course of things, apart from divine interference, natures in the genus of substance subsist *per se* and are their own supposita and are the subjects of accidents, while accidents exist only in substances and are not themselves subjects of inherence. If Aristotle's mistake was to make the normal necessary and essential, does not Ockham imply that substantial and accidental natures differ only with respect to the normal and not with respect to anything essential at all?[74]

The Incarnation provides the basis for an exception to the general rule that substances exist in themselves.

But isn't Christ's humanity not genuine if he is not a human person? If we are human persons and he isn't then in what sense is He *homoousias* with us? The question confuses nature and person. Helminiak is clear:

> Nature is what makes one human or not. Christ has a complete human nature. Therefore, Christ is completely human. One indication of the misunderstanding is reference to person, hypostasis, as *something we have*: "Did Christ have a human hypostasis? We do. Then, if he did not, how can we claim he is fully human?" But hypostasis is not something someone has. The hypostasis is the someone who has whatever is had. If the divine is the someone who has whatever is had. If the divine hypostasis, the Word, has all the qualities that

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[73]Adams, "Relations, Inherence and Subsistence: or, Was Ockham a Nestorian in Christology?," 71.

[74]Ibid., 73.

> constitute someone as human--a human nature--then the Word, a divine hypostasis, is a human being, and fully so, period.[75]

Herbert McCabe expressed a similar thought when he said,

> A human person just is a person with a human nature, and it makes absolutely no difference to the logic of this whether the same person does nor does not exist from eternity as divine.[76]

The contention of Chalcedonian Christology is that Christ is fully and genuinely human. This humanity is not in any way impaired because no essential human attribute is missing. In more precise language we are a hypostasis and Christ is a hypostasis. We have a human nature and Christ has a human nature. The doctrine of the impersonal human nature of Christ means that Christ's human nature does not exist by itself but is owned by the subject of the divine Logos.

We have not defined exactly what the essential properties of Christ's human nature are. Morris develops a definition of human nature which "will categorize all human properties logically incompatible with a divine incarnation as, at most, essential to being *merely human*."[77] An impersonal human nature would be compatible with Morris' concept of Jesus as *fully human*.

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[75]Helminiak, The Same Jesus, 292n8.

[76]Herbert McCabe and Maurice Wiles, "The Incarnation: An Exchange," New Blackfriars 58 (Dec 1977), 552.

[77]Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate, 66. On the distinction between *merely* and *fully* human see 65-67; 142-44. For Morris' answer to the concern that his methodology makes "the concept of human nature endlessly malleable," see p. 144.

CHAPTER 4

THE SOTERIOLOGICAL OBJECTION

For years the church has sung a familiar hymn. The chorus of this hymn has profound theological implications: "Amazing Love, How can it be? That Thou my God shouldst die for me?" The second stanza sings "Tis mystery all! Th' Immortal dies!"[1] What does it mean for God to die? Doesn't Scripture teach that God is immortal and cannot die? But if God cannot die then who died on the cross for the sins of the world? Clark expresses the soteriological objection against an "impersonal nature,"

> Let us take it for granted that God cannot die. Now, if Christ be one divine person, no person was crucified and died. What then died on the cross? A 'nature?' . . . If the person, being the Logos, could not be crucified, was our salvation accomplished by the alleged death of an impersonal nature?[2]

We argued in chapter one that Clark's objections were an indication of a change in his own Christology. He never attempts an explanation of his previous writings nor does he deal with the Scriptures he once provided to prove traditional

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[1]The hymn is "And Can it Be That I Should Gain" written by Charles Wesley in 1738. On Wesley's Christology see John Deschner, Wesley's Christology (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960).

[2]Clark, The Incarnation, 69.

Chalcedonian Christology. In The Atonement he wrote, "God cannot die. In fact it is precisely because God cannot die that Jehovah became man."[3] He cites Mark 10:45; John 12:27; and Hebrews 2:9,14 and says, "These four verses state explicitly that Jehovah became incarnate in order to die."[4] What does "*Jehovah* became incarnate in order to die" mean if it was not God who died but a separate man. Of the virgin birth he said:

> Why could not the Logos in his human nature have had two human parents? Would that not have made him more truly human? In answer to this question two reasons can be given and there may be others.
>
> The first is that this was not the birth of a new person. Other births are births of new persons. No one who reads these words existed in 1850. Ordinary births require two parents; but the birth of a preexisting person is not ordinary.[5]

Note particularly that Clark is speaking specifically about the Logos *in his human nature*. According to this passage the virgin birth of Jesus was the birth of only one person. No where in The Incarnation does Clark explain the implications of his "two-person" Christology for the virgin birth. In The Trinity Nestorianism is labeled "on the ground of the mediatorial atonement, a heresy."[6] With all that preceded The Incarnation it is difficult to understand why Clark made no reference to any of these writings to show how they could be

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[3]Clark, The Atonement, 50.

[4]Ibid., 50-51.

[5]Ibid., 37.

[6]Clark, The Trinity, 59.

harmonized with what his latest work. But something caused Clark some new caution with respect to traditional Chalcedonian Christology. Though the questions are hold they were sufficient to cause this stalwart of the faith to reexamine the manner in which he spoke of the incarnation.

Luther wrote "if I believe that the human nature alone suffered for me, then is Christ worse than no Savior to me."[7] This should not be construed to mean that Luther thought there was a human person that suffered for he taught that the human nature of Christ was impersonal.[8] In the incarnation Luther believed that God suffered. Calvin agreed,

> In short, since neither as God alone could he feel death, nor as man alone could he overcome it, he coupled human nature with divine that to atone for sin he might submit the weakness of the one to death; and that, wrestling with death by the power of the other nature, he might win victory for us.[9]

Calvin and Luther, along with the early church, agreed that God could not suffer in His divine nature. Because of this the Logos took on a human nature *which enabled Him to suffer*. The sufferings of the human nature belong to the Son who is

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[7]Cited in H. R. Mackintosh, The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ (New York: Scribner, 1928), 233-34.

[8]Paul Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 194.

[9]John Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), II.12.3. This doctrine was vigorously debated during the reformation. See Pannenberg's discussion for details. Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, 297-306. On Calvin's view in particular see Joseph N. Tylenda, "Calvin's Understanding of the Communication of Properties," The Westminster Theological Journal 38 (Fall 1975), 54-65.

the ultimate metaphysical subject of that particular human nature. The predication of human properties to the person of the Logos is called the communication of properties (Lat. *communicatio idiomatum*).[10] The following table shows a few rules which govern the communication of properties:

Table 2.--The Communication of Properties

Rule	Illustration
Valid for concrete attributes but not for abstract attributes	God was born. Not, divinity was born.
Invalid for propositions which deny Christ an attribute which he possesses by virtue of either nature.	Can't say, "God did not die."
Propositions which extend to the time prior to the incarnation are problematic and should be avoided.	Can't say, "Man became God," or "God was created." "Jesus is creator" is, however, true.
Some heretical propositions may be open to a correct interpretation but must be carefully defined.	"Christ is a creature" = Christ's human nature is a creation.

McGuckin explains,

> Yet, the one hanging on the cross is not God-in-his-own-nature but rather God-enfleshed-within-history, and within this new condition of existence God suffers in so far as his own body suffers. He does not suffer in his deity, but he does suffer in his humanity which he has appropriated as his own. Like any ordinary person, the physical act is attributed to a single personal reality. Arthur's tooth may hurt him, but it is not Arthur's tooth which has the toothache, it is Arthur who is said to **suffer. The psychic personal subject Arthur, however,** does not suffer the pain in his psychic reality, he

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[10]J. F. Rigney says "Historically it has provided the clearest test of orthodoxy about the incarnation." New Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v. "Communication of Idioms," by J. F. Rigney.

> suffers in his physical reality, nevertheless because this body is Arthur's own, it is Arthur who is doing the suffering, and no one else.[11]

Properly speaking the predicating of human attributes is made to the divine person or subject rather than the divine nature. Joseph Tylenda draws five examples from Calvin's writings and comments, "In none of the examples is the property of one nature applied to the other *nature as such*; it is always applied to a *subject possessing that nature*."[12]

The validity of the doctrine hinges on a distinction of some sort existing between person and nature. This distinction seems to be denied by Clark. "Only a spirit, a soul (including the souls of animals), or a person can suffer."[13] "The Second Person could not have suffered, for Deity is impassible."[14] A "nature" cannot suffer for he asks,

> If mere qualities cannot suffer and die, and if the Logos is eternally immutable, whose death was it that propitiated the Father by suffering the penalty we deserved to suffer? The Scriptures say the man Christ Jesus.[15]

It seems hard to escape the implication that Clark so strenuously argues for: the man Jesus is a metaphysical subject separate and independent of the Logos. It is this

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[11]McGuckin, St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy, 202.

[12]Tylenda, "Calvin's Understanding of the Communication of Properties," 59.

[13]Clark, The Incarnation, 67.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., 68

human person who died. Clark continues:

> Stung by such an absurdity one of the most orthodox theologians, a veritable stickler for every detail, insists that Christ's human nature is not impersonal because it is attached to the divine person. In other words the Second Person of the Trinity is ignorant of something, the Person gets tired, and the Person died on the cross! In contrast with these impossibilities the Scripture, as before noted, speaks of 'the man Christ Jesus' (I Timothy 2:5) How can a man be a man without being a human person?[16]

The Theopaschite Controversy

In the sixth century a phrase sparked a critical theological debate: Unus de trinitate pasus est.[17] Ignatius had already spoken of the "blood of God" and the "Passion of my God."[18] This language combined with Cyril's debate with Nestorius over the meaning of "Theotokos" were significant precursors to the Theopaschite controversy.[19]

Marcel Sarot is correct in saying:

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[16]Ibid., 69.

[17]See Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol 2 part 2, 317-43; McGuckin, "The 'Theopaschite Confession' (Text and Historical Context): a Study in the Cyrilline Re-Interpretation of Chalcedon," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 35 (April 1984), 239-55; Meyendorff, Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, 69-89; and, Marcel Sarot, "Patripassianism, Theopaschitism, and the Suffering of God. Some Historical and Systematic Considerations," Religious Studies 26 (1986), 363-75.

[18]Ignatius, "Letter to the Ephesians" and "The Epistle to the Romans," in Early Christian Writings, ed. Betty Radice (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), chaps. 1 and 6 respectively.

[19]Cyril's twelfth anathema reads "If any one confesses not that the Word of God suffered in the flesh, and was crucified in flesh, and tasted death in flesh, and was made firstborn of the dead, in so far as He is life and giver of life, as God; let him be anathema."

> it is too often forgotten that 'theos' in 'theopaschite' has the same meaning as 'theos' in 'theotokos': in both cases 'theos' does not mean 'God simpliciter', or 'the divinity', but 'God incarnate, the incarnate Logos'.[20]

Scripture itself speaks in theopaschite language. The most frequently cited passage is I Cor 2:8 "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." While it is frequently cited, it is rarely, if ever, exegeted to determine if "Lord of glory" can support the Chalcedonian interpretation. The phrase, "Lord of Glory", occurs in I Enoch (22:14; 25:3,7; 27:3,4; 66:2; 75:3) and in each case is a title of God. C. K. Barrett says the phrase "primarily means 'glorious Lord', but Jesus is glorious because he belongs to the heavenly world and shares in the being of God."[21] The word "Lord" (κύριος) has a wide range of meanings.[22] Are Chalcedonians guilty of semantic anachronism? Grudem says the expression "reminds us specifically of Jesus' divine nature."[23] In true Reformed

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[20]Sarot, "Patripassianism, Theopaschitism and the Suffering of God. Some Historical and Systematic Considerations," 372.

[21]C. K. Barrett, A Commentary of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1968), 72.

[22]Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. Dictionary of Paul and His Letters (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), s.v. "Lord," by L. W. Hurtado.

[23]Grudem, Systematic Theology, 562. Grudem also uses Luke 1:43 where Elizabeth calls Mary "the mother of *my Lord*." He says Elizabeth "could not be using the word 'Lord' to mean something like human 'master.' She must rather be using it in the strong Old Testament sense . . . it is difficult to understand the word 'Lord' in this context in any weaker sense." 544. Could not Elizabeth have meant "Lord" in the

tradition he continues, "Even though Jesus' divine nature was not crucified, it was true of Jesus as a *person* that he was crucified."[24] This merely states the position but, again, offers no support.

We begin by noting that the Chalcedcnian interpretation rests not so much on the word "Lord" but on the expression "Lord of glory." The association of "glory" (δόξα) with Jesus has some strong implications. Carey C. Newman in his work, Paul's Glory-Christology, observes:

> But Paul's conviction that Jesus is God's Glory is not merely an intellectual association. Paul's identification of Jesus with Glory bordered on, if not expressly implied, binitarianism, and therefore ran the risk of compromising the monotheistic center of his Jewish heritage. As with μορφή and εἰκών, in his use of δόξα Paul was flirting with religious apostasy.[25]

Another passage is Acts 20:28, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."[26] Harris persuasively argues for translating the debated section of the passage as: "To shepherd the church of God (the Father) which he obtained with

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sense of Messiah? Elizabeth could have given Messiah the title Lord without thinking of Him as God Incarnate.

[24]Ibid., 562.

[25]Carey C. Newman, Paul's Glory-Christology (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 11.

[26]On the textual variations see Harris, Jesus as God, 133-37. Bruce Metzger's A Textual Commentary on the New Testament (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 480-82, rates θεοῦ and αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου as {C} and {B} respectively.

the blood of his own Son/one."[27] He interprets ὁ ἴδιος as a substantival. If this is true then "blood" is not being predicated of "God" and the passage is not a strong support for theopaschitism. Paul does speak of the blood of Christ (Rom 3:25; 5:9; I Cor 10:16; Eph 1:7). True, Scripture does not speak of "God" as dying or being crucified. Nestorius noted:

> And even if you make your way through the whole of the New (Testament) you will nowhere find death attributed to God (τω θεω = the Godhead), but either to Christ or the Son of the Lord. For (the designation) 'Christ' and 'Son' and 'Lord' applied by Scripture to the Only-begotten is an expression of the two natures (των φύσεων ἑστὶ των δύο σημαντικόν) and reveals now the Godhead, now the manhood, now both.[28]

But there is a very good reason why this should be the case. In the New Testament θεός most frequently refers to the Father.[29] Harris argues that if Jesus had consistently been called θεός it would have made it difficult to resist the charge that the early Christians were ditheistic. It would also have jeopardized the real humanity of Jesus, "not to speak of the theological conundrums that would have been created by expressions as 'God died for us' (Rom 5:8) or 'God's physical body' (cf. Col 1:22)."[30] Those "theological

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[27]Harris, Jesus as God, 137-39.

[28]Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol 1, 454.

[29]Harris, Jesus as God, 296.

conundrums" did eventually surface as the early Christians struggled to understand the implications of a genuine hypostatic union. Theopaschite language is theological in nature similar to when theologians speak of the Trinity. It is the label given to the formulated *conclusion* of what the entire data of Scripture says on the subject of the suffering of God in relation to the hypostatic union. Its veracity does not depend on how closely it follows Biblical language, but rather how closely it is true to Biblical teaching.

The Monophysite patriarch of Antioch, Peter the Fuller, introduced a modification into the *Trisagion*: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us."[31] The modification was the addition of the phrase "crucified for us." The modification was opposed by the "Sleepless Monks".[32] The problem was that the modification seemed to attribute suffering to the divine nature.

> While at Constantinople the Trishagion was referred solely to the Trinity, in Antioch, which was considered the centre of 'monophysitism', it received a christological explanation.[33]

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[31]Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol 2, pt 2, 254-62.

[32]Ibid., 252. "The Sleepless Monks of Eirenaion must be considered the most important centre of strict-Chalcedonian christology in the region of Constantinople." McGuckin says they were so named "because of their constant schedules of monastic offices." McGuckin, "The 'Theopaschite Confession' (Text and Historical Context): A Study in the Cyrilline Re-interpretation of Chalcedon," 241n6.

[33]Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol 2, pt 2, 256.

But the monophysites intended the expression to be predicated only of the Son. Severus says, "This statement of praise is made of the only (Son) of God, of the Word, who for us assumed flesh and became human."[34] We note that the Monophysites did not believe that Christ was one nature *in the same manner as the Eutychians*. Philoxenus and Severus both objected to any connection that might be made between them and the Eutychians.[35] The Monophysites rejected Chalcedon because they saw it as a concession to Nestorianism.

> Since Joseph Lebon's monumental work on Monophysitism was published, it has generally been recognized that the Monophysite doctrine of the incarnation, especially the scientific form given to it by Severus, is nothing but Cyrillian Christology. This point has been made abundantly clear during recent consultations between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian theologians: 'Monophysitism,' i.e., adherence to Cyril's christological formulas, does not imply acceptance of Eutyches' views.[36]

Some years later the Scythian monks (from Scythopolis in Galilee) attempted to reconcile the Monophysites and the Cyrilline Easterners. Under the leadership of John Maxentius they introduced the phrase "One of the Trinity was crucified" (Unus ex trinitate crucifixus est). McGuckin notes Maxentius' motives were intended to "force the strict Dyophysites (mainly the Romans under Pope Hormisdas) to make some concession to the Monophysites and . . . as a basis for ending the Acacian

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34. Ibid., 146.

35. Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon, 271n1.

36. Meyendorff, Christ in Eastern Christian Tradition, 269. See also Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon, 269.

schism."[37] The formula was rejected by the patriarch of Constantinople, John the Cappadocian (517-20), and condemned by the "Sleepless Monks," but was accepted by Fulgentius of Ruspe on behalf of the Africans with a slight alteration (una de trinitate persona crucifixa est). This alteration, McGuckin observes, was made "possibly for greater precision in the Trinitarian context, or possibly to distance the Theopaschite position from that of Peter the Fuller's alteration of the Trisagion."[38]

This brief history of only one Theopaschite controversy should demonstrate that the church had several concerns to consider in accurately formulating an orthodox Christology.[39] The early church was virtually unanimous that

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[37]McGuckin, "The 'Theopaschite Confession' (Text and Historical Context): a Study in the Cyrilline Re-interpretation of Chalcedon," 244. The Acacian schism started with Rome's rejection of Zeno's *Henoticon* in 482 which was Zeno's attempt to reconcile the Monophysites and the Dyophysites. It was rejected because it failed to mention Chalcedon and endorsed Cyril's 12 anathemas thus favoring the Monophysites. The schism ended in 519. For an account of the events leading to the schism see Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon, 277n5. Grillmeier notes the Scythian monks intended to protect Chalcedon since they viewed it as "not sufficient against Nestorius and for this reason needed to be expanded." Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol 2, pt. 2, 321n15.

[38]McGuckin, "The 'Theopaschite Confession' (Text and Historical Context): a Study in the Cyrilline Re-interpretation of Chalcedon," 245.

[39]Four other periods are also designated: the 2nd and 3rd centuries with the modalistic monarchianism debate; Luther's "theologia crucis"; the "suffering God" in 20th-century British theology; and in modern German theology with Barth, Bonhoeffer, Moltmann, et al. Sarot, "Patripassianism, Theopaschitism and the Suffering of God. Some Historical and

God could not suffer *in the divine nature*. God was impassible yet the church wanted to acknowledge that the work accomplished on the cross was that of God Himself.

Who Suffered and Died on the Cross?

Cyril questions:

> Since we believe that Our Lord Jesus Christ is one, that is God the Word seen in human form, or made man like us, then how can we both attribute suffering to him and yet still hold him impassible as God?[40]

Cyril answers with an anthropological analogy. When the physical body suffers the soul is "reckoned to be involved in the suffering in so far as that which suffers is its very own body."[41] Likewise with the ineffable union of the incarnation. It is the human nature which suffers. But because it is the Word's very own flesh the suffering of the flesh may be attributed to the Word. Not that the Word suffers in the divine nature but rather in the human nature. "The flesh allows the Word of God a new condition of expression. In his divine nature he could not possibly suffer, in his human nature he can."[42] Cyril expresses this with some of the strongest language possible. In particular, one expression many find quite objectionable, paradoxical, or simply

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Systematic Considerations," 374.

[40]Cyril of Alexandria, "Scholia on the Incarnation," 327.

[41]Ibid.

[42]McGuckin, St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy, 203.

incoherent and contradictory. He describes the Word as "suffer[ing] impassibly!"[43] His intention was to allow both truths to be felt with full force. He did not want to permit one side to overshadow or diminish the truth of the other.

But, it may be objected, doesn't all this talk of Christ suffering in his human nature but not in his divine miss the point that Clark is pressing: <u>who</u> suffered on the cross for a <u>nature</u> cannot suffer? The objection, however, seems to miss Cyril's point. As humans, we have certain pains, emotions, and feelings precisely because of our corporeal existence. An incorporeal being cannot experience the sensation of having its finger pricked. The soul, combined with a human body, can be the subject of such a sensation yet not in itself but by virtue of its union with the body. Nonetheless, it is the person who experiences the pain. Furthermore, the union of my soul with this body makes the experiences of this body uniquely mine. The pains "I" feel you cannot. In a more awkward sense, but to demonstrate the parallel with the incarnation, the experiences of my body are "owned" by me. The experiences of the human nature of Christ are "owned by" the Logos of God. Were there two persons in the incarnation the experiences of the human nature would be those a mere man, nothing more. Subsequently, the work achieved by Christ would be that of a man and not God.

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[43]Cyril of Alexandria, "Scholia on the Incarnation," 332.

But what about the death of Christ? What does it mean to say Christ *died*? In part, this depends on how we define death. Death is not the extinction of a person. It may be defined as the "unnatural separation of the person from bodily life."[44] *Christ's* death is the unnatural separation of his human soul from his physical body.

> The intermediate state account, entailing a dualistic anthropology, would generate no christological difficulty. In fact it would solve this problem. Since human nature is such that persons can exist temporarily without their bodies, Jesus Christ could have existed between Friday and Sunday without his body and yet have been one person with both a divine and human nature. Lacking a body does not entail lacking human nature completely.[45]

But doesn't this make Christ's human nature unlike ours? No, for it is in the same state that any human finds itself at the point of death. It is an unnatural state to be sure but it is still a genuinely *human* condition. The unnaturalness of this condition is seen in Aquinas' belief that a disembodied human is not a *person*.[46] We might say the term *person* in Thomistic thought is a "phase-sortal" rather than a "substance-sortal."[47]

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[44]John W. Cooper, Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1989), 214.

[45]Ibid., 145.

[46]Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, trans. the Fathers of the Domincan Province (Westminster, Md: Christian Classics, 1911), 1,74,4. F. C. Coplestone, Aquinas (England: Penguin Books, 1955), 160. "And though the human soul survives death, it is not strictly speaking a human person . . . for the word 'person' signifies a complete substance of rational nature." Anthony Kenny, Aquinas on Mind (New York: Routledge, 1993), chap. 11.

[47]See Swinburne, The Christian God, 13-16.

Is the Soul Alone a Human Person?

This brings us back to Clark's insistence that it is the soul, and soul alone, which is a human person. He criticizes Hodge for saying," 'Soul and body constitute one individual man, or human person.' But Scripture explicitly, and several times, contradicts this dictum."[48] Simply because the soul can exist apart from the body and maintain essential identity does not prove that it is the full and normal condition of human nature. The Chalcedonian creed states that Christ is "of rational soul *and body*."[49] The body may not be necessary to maintain essential identity but it may be necessary to form human nature *as it was intended to be*.

Anthony Hoekema explains:

> According to the Scriptures, the body is no less real than the soul; God created man in his totality, as both body and soul. Nor is the body inferior to the soul, or non-essential to man's true existence; if this were so, the Second Person of the Trinity could never have assumed a genuine human nature with a genuine human body. In biblical thought the body is not a tomb for the soul but a temple of the Holy Spirit; man is not complete apart from the body. Therefore the future blessedness of the believer is not merely the continued existence of his soul, but includes as its richest aspect the resurrection of his body. That resurrection will be for believer's a transition to glory, in which our bodies shall become like the glorious body of Christ (Phil 3:21).[50]

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[48]Clark, The Incarnation, 41.

[49]Bartel, "Like Us in All Things, Apart from Sin?," 32, stresses this point. "[T]he Chalcedonian conception of human nature: 'x has a human nature' means 'x has a rational soul of a certain kind which is embodied in a particular body of a certain kind.'"

[50]Anthony A. Hoekema, The Bible and the Future (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 91.

Hoekema, it would seem, agrees with Hodge. He says, "The human person must be understood as an embodied soul or a 'besouled' body."[51] The doctrine of the intermediate state, Cooper believes, "logically requires the possibility that persons can exist without bodies."[52] Is there a conflict between Hoekema and Cooper? A careful examination will reveal both are dealing with the same issue from different perspectives. Cooper is establishing that personal identity is retained during the intermediate state.

> And the ontological possibility of that mode of human existence is all I mean by dualism. Personal existence apart from earthly-bodily existence is possible. When we die, there is a dichotomy of ego and the earthly organism. We are constituted in such a way that we can survive 'coming apart' at death, unnatural as this may be. This is all I mean by dualism.[53]

Even Cooper speaks of this separation as "unnatural." Hoekema is stressing the natural and original created condition of the human person. Hence, his focus is on the most "natural" condition of the human person. Cooper says that if the human person is "essentially tied to particular bodies, and if we have two bodies--one earthly and one resurrection body, then it logically follows that we have two persons, not one and the same person."[54] When Hoekema speaks of the body as not being

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[51]Anthony A. Hoekema, Created in God's Image (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 216.

[52]Cooper, Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting, 179. Note how theology informs philosophy.

[53]Ibid., 178.

[54]Ibid., 185.

"non-essential to human existence" his thought is not that the human person must be tied to a *particular* body but rather that the natural condition is for the human person to be in a body.[55]

We conclude that while personal identity is retained by virtue of the existence of the human soul, the *intended* natural condition of the human person is to be embodied and that any separation which does occur is temporary and unnatural. Hodge is therefore correct to say that a soul and body constitute a human person. Clark restricts the term person to refer only to that which is required to establish identity. Hodge, like Aquinas, preserve the term person for the embodied condition to highlight the unnaturalness of the disembodied condition.

Suffering in the Human Nature

When Christ assumed a complete human nature (a rational soul and body) he assumed a manner of existence which enabled him to suffer and die *in that nature*. I Peter emphasizes this point. "Christ "bore our sins *in his body* on the cross" (I Peter 2:24); "Christ also *died* for sins once for all . . . having been *put to death in the flesh*" (3:18), and "Christ *suffered in the flesh*" (4:1). The all-important distinction is between nature and person.

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[55]Hoekema never expresses this thought exactly as I have it here, but I believe it is a valid inference from his writings and in particular his discussion of the Intermediate State. See Hoekema, Created in God's Image, 218-22.

> there must always be a very clear-cut distinction between that which is the agent of a set of experiences and that which is merely the sphere of these experiences, i.e., between the *principium quod* and the *principium quo*.[56]

Clark's ultimate predication of the sufferings of Christ to the "man" Jesus is to personalize the human nature and thus creates two metaphysical subjects. If Nestorius didn't do this Theodore of Mopsuestia did (c. 350-c. 427). McNamara comments, "What really shows us that Theodore is personalizing the manhood is his constant antithesis between the two natures as two equally independent subjects of attribution."[57]

Karl Rahner similarly speaks of God as he is in himself and as he is in something else in discussing the relationship of the Incarnation to the immutability of God.

> If we face squarely the fact of the incarnation, which our faith testifies to be the fundamental dogma of Christianity, we must simply say: God can become something, he who is unchangeable in himself can *himself* become subject to change *in something else*.[58]

Weinandy amends this slightly by suggesting we say,

> God is subject to change "*as* something else" rather than "*in* something else," since God is not existing *in* man as if man were a container in which God dwelt, but God actually exists *as* man--God *is* man.[59]

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[56]Kevin McNamara, "Theodore of Mopsuestia and the Nestorian Heresy," The Irish Theological Quarterly 19 (July 1952), 273.

[57]Ibid., 272.

[58]Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of the Incarnation," in Theological Investigations, vol 4, trans. Kevin Smith (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), 113.

[59]Weinandy, Does God Change?, 171. Weinandy says Rahner's position is "in complete conformity with the Catholic Tradition." 163.

But Clark apparently does not accept the *communicatio idiomatum* in any sense. He states that theologians may claim that Jesus is a man but then they argue "that he was not a man at all--he was only a 'nature.'"[60] This is not only misleading it isn't true. The position of this thesis is that a "man" is simply someone who possesses a "rational soul and body." For Clark this is the very problem because for him a rational soul is by definition a human person and so the assertion is a contradiction. And, indeed, given Clark's definitions it is contradictory. If these definitions are rejected the contradiction dissolves. His objection continues,

> For them [theologians] the boy in the temple and the assistant carpenter in Nazareth was some set of qualities attaching to the Second Person. But this is impossible for two reasons. First, it attaches contradictory characteristics to a single Person. . . . In the second place, closely related to the first, the characteristics of an ordinary man cannot possibly attach to Deity. The Logos never tired or thirsty; the Logos never increases in either stature or wisdom. The Logos is eternal and immutable. How can these human characteristics possibly be characteristics of God? But by irresponsibly assigning such qualities to God, the theologians contradict their other statement that Jesus was a true man.[61]

Clark charges that the communication of properties is impossible because it applies "contradictory" characteristics to the same person. This would be true only if we were "to attribute to the same subject at the same time *and under the same aspect* mutually incompatible properties."[62] To say the

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[60]Clark, The Incarnation, 76-77.

[61]Ibid., 77.

[62]O'Collins, Christology, 234.

Logos was tired must mean, to Clark, that the Logos *in his divine nature* was tired. Since this is impossible no human attributes can be predicated of the Logos. *By not allowing theology to alter his philosophy Clark cannot come to terms with orthodox Christology.* To simply label the predication of human attributes to the Logos as "irresponsible" is to indict virtually every orthodox Christian thinker who has struggled with this issue to include, Athanasius, Hilary of Poitiers, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, John of Damascus, Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Ockham, Calvin, Luther, Zwingli, Wesley, Hodge, Warfield, Buswell, Strong, Berkouwer and those who continue in this tradition such as Skarsaune, Sturch, Morris, Erickson, Mascal, Galot, Runia, Anderson, Harris, Weinandy, and Wells. We should not fail to mention the numerous creeds which affirm, in remarkably similar language, Chalcedonian Christology.[63] To dismiss the work of so many over so long a period of time as "irresponsible" is an estimation which is in itself, at best, irresponsible and, at worst, disrespectful of the minds in which the Holy Spirit was not entirely missing.

> For any attribution to the church Fathers of logical inconsistency is a strong charge indeed. If the church has been guided by God in such matters as the formulation of its creeds, conciliar decrees, and catechisms, even with a rather loose providential hand, we would not expect glaring logical flaws in its central doctrinal affirmations."[64]

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[63]See Appendix 1.

[64]Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate, 46.

This does not mean the Fathers were infallible. But is the church, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, so plagued with irresponsible leaders and in spite of the Spirit's work of illumination that she cannot in 1,500 years of discussion adequately and responsibly ascertain the identity of her savior?[65] The thought is most incongruous.

Finally, there are those who deny that God is impassible or immutable in the same sense as that of the early church Fathers. John Robbins does little more than fuel the pejorative fire with his comment in the Foreword to The Incarnation.

> The idea that God suffers is not a new idea; it has a long and heretical history. Most recently, Sun Moon's Unification Church is built on the idea that man's role is to reduce the suffering of God.[66]

Robbins cites Norman Anderson's The Mystery of the Incarnation as an example of someone who believes that God can suffer. But the only "heretical history" of God suffering is that of patripassionism which is not Anderson's position. Responsible evangelical expositions exist which treat the immutability and impassibility of God. Bruce Ware has demonstrated that some objectivity can be given in deciding what is an anthropo-

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[65]This is certainly the implication of John Robbin's words in the Foreword to The Incarnation when he says that Clark's argument "eliminates some of the problems that have plagued discussion of the Incarnation for centuries." Robbins himself describes the "orthodox" answer to objections against the Incarnation from liberals as "abysmal." He writes "we now have a solution to the puzzles of the incarnation . . . we are obliged to accept it." Clark, The Incarnation, 78.

[66]Clark, The Incarnation, ix.

morphic expression of God and what is not.[67] His suggested criterion is that "A given ascription to God may rightly be understood as anthropomorhic when Scripture clearly presents God as transcending the very human or finite features it elsewhere attributes to him."[68]

Clark's contention that a "nature" died is a mischaracterization of orthodoxy. No one says the "nature" seen in abstract died. Those who might do not properly understand the incarnation. Furthermore, no one says that God *qua God* died.[69] Rather, the Logos, having been united to a mortal human nature and thereby becoming the ultimate metaphysical subject for the experiences of that human nature may be said to have died in so far as his human soul was separated from his physical body.

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[67]Bruce Ware, "An Evangelical Reformulation of the Doctrine of the Immutability of God," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 29 (Dec 1986), 431-46.

[68]Ibid., 442. The clearest example is where God is ascribed bodily parts yet other Scripture testifies that God is not confined physically hence the references to bodily parts may be justifiably taken as figurative expressions.

[69]Allan Bäck, "Aquinas on the Incarnation," The New Scholasticism 56 (1982), 127-45. Bäck argues that the use of *qua* propositions does *not* solve the problem of contradictions in the incarnation. Morris shares this skepticism in some respects. Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate, 46-55. For a brief response to Morris see Eleonore Stump, review of The Logic of God Incarnate, by Thomas V. Morris. Faith and Philosophy 6 (1989), 219-20. The historic position of the church seems to have incorporated some form of reduplicative propositions (Christ *as a man* is ignorant and Christ *as God* is omniscient) to explain the incarnation. Perhaps, again, the fathers would encourage us to reconsider our confidence in our understanding of *qua* propositions in light of the incarnation

CHAPTER 5

VARIOUS THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL OBJECTIONS

Any Christological formulation must be compared to Scripture to see if it adequately accounts for all the data and not just some. Clark presents other passages of Scripture in support of his view.

Acts 2:27 says, "Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades." Clark says this can't refer to the Logos since "It seems absurd that the Second Person of the Trinity would have gone to Gehenna, and certainly peculiar if he had gone to Hades, this last because the Second Person could not die."[1] Therefore, Clark concludes the reference to "soul" must be to a man or human person.

The problem is the one discussed in chapter four. The Second Person of the Trinity *can* die because he is united to a human nature which is capable of death. The separation of that human soul from its body (the definition of death) is predicated of the Second Person of the Trinity because it is uniquely his human nature and what happens to that nature is said to happen *to him*. The Logos suffers as a man.

Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 record Jesus as saying,

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[1]Clark, The Incarnation, 70.

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

> Since a rift within the eternal immutable Persons of the Trinity is absolutely impossible, Jesus is here speaking as a man. An impersonal human 'nature' cannot speak. Nor is there much intelligibility in supposing that the Father could forsake a 'nature.'[2]

This is a difficult passage. True, Jesus is speaking as a man. True, an impersonal nature cannot speak. No one ever said an abstract impersonal nature could speak. Nor did the Father forsake a nature. But why does Clark describe this as a "rift?" Carson notes, "If we ask what ontological sense the Father and the Son are here divided, the answer must be that we do not know because we are not told."[3] Jesus possessed a human soul which enabled him to experience God as a human. That human soul surely felt something of a forsaking while on the cross. What precisely was involved ontologically between the Son and the Father is entirely speculative. But just as hard cases make bad law, difficult passages make bad theology.

James 1:13 says God cannot be tempted. But since Jesus was tempted (Matt 4; Heb 4:15) he must have been a man. The reasoning here is of course to some extent correct. But Clark is pressing the term "man" to mean a separate person. It is the incarnation that makes temptation possible. Since Jesus could experience hunger (Matt 4:2) he could be tempted to make bread to satisfy that hunger. But hunger is a

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[2]Ibid., 70-71.

[3]D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol 8, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1984), 579.

phenomena of a corporeal body and not an incorporeal spirit. Since God is Spirit he does not hunger.[4] Morris argues that a two-minds view of the Incarnation can adequately account for the temptation of Christ without having to postulate a human person as the subject of the temptation.[5]

Clark points to passages which refer to Jesus as a "man" (John 8:40; Acts 2:22; I Tim 2:5). Matthew 26:38 says Jesus' "soul" was troubled and since nothing troubles an immutable God this must be a human soul.

The following paragraph is instructive on Clark's thinking.

> But could not a merely human prophet, Elijah or Isaiah, by divine revelation, have said everything Jesus said? Well, not exactly: There are some things Elijah could not have said, such as, 'I and my Father are one.' But on the other hand, could not Jesus have said this through his human 'nature?' Probably not, but it is very difficult to determine clearly which statements came through which nature. . . . One statement is very clearly not a statement by the Logos. On the cross Jesus said, 'I thirst.' No trinitarian Person could have said this because the Three Persons are pure incorporeal spirits and thirst is a phenomena of a body.[6]

Clark identifies other examples of statements "of the Logos"

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[4]Neither the making of bread nor hunger is the real issue of the first temptation. But they are the occasion for Jesus "to use his sonship in a way inconsistent with his God-ordained mission." Carson, "Matthew," 113.

[5]Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate, 137-62. John Feinberg criticizes Morris' libertarian defense and offers a compatibilist alternative in "The Incarnation of Jesus Christ," in In Defense of Miracles, ed. Douglas Geivett and Gary R. Habermas (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 241-45.

[6]Clark, The Incarnation, 73.

as being John 17:5, "Glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I ever had with Thee before the world was," and Jesus' promise of the Spirit in John 15:26.[7] Clark is clearly describing two independent subjects which are active in the Incarnate Christ. Clark misses the point of orthodox Christology by arguing that no person of the Trinity could say "I thirst" since to thirst is a phenomena of the body. Prior to the Incarnation no member of the Trinity could say "I thirst." But because the Son now has a body and that body may experience thirst then the Son can say "I thirst." Clark also objects that if the Logos could thirst it would involve a change from the condition of not thirsting. But this would violate his immutability since God cannot change. Since an impersonal human nature cannot thirst who thirsted on the cross?[8]

Meyendorff has suggested that while immutability may be a property of the nature of God, if we are to take the hypostatic union seriously it can't be a property of "his hypostatic existence, which did change when the Son of God 'became flesh.'"[9] Thus the hypostasis can change but not the

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[7]Ibid., 74.

[8]This entire problem is sidestepped if one interprets the passage in a figurative rather than a literal way. For a fascinating, but unpersuasive, attempt at this see L. Th. Witkamp, "Jesus' Thirst in John 19:28-30: Literal or Figurative," Journal of Biblical Literature 115 (Fall 1996), 489-510.

[9]Meyendorff, Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, 212-13.

nature. Thus the distinction between ousia and hypostasis is pressed to the fullest degree. E. L. Mascal says Meyendorff is right but only in a technical sense and he must be carefully understood.[10] Mascal insists the mutability must be "in the human nature which the Logos assumes, not a change undergone by the Logos in the act of assuming it."[11] The nuance that Mascal is pressing for seems to be the very point that Meyendorff wants to reject for he wants to predicate some change in the very hypostasis of the Logos. Weinandy argues that the immutability of God is required to guarantee a genuine incarnation.

> In other words to maintain a true incarnation one must guarantee the immutability of the Logos not just because he is God, but also in order that one can truly say that it is *God* who became and is man. If the Logos changes in becoming man because of the nature of the union, then he is no longer God, and thus to say 'God has become man' or that 'God is man' becomes unintelligible. The same is true with regard to humanity. It too must maintain its integrity, if the incarnation is to remain intelligible.[12]

There is a wide spectrum of opinion within the camp of those who hold to Chalcedonian Christology on what is meant by God's immutability. The same was seen in the previous chapter with impassibility. But evangelical scholars can be found on a wide scale on this issue as well. Caution must be exercised here. Someone may misconstrue this to mean a position is acceptable as long as it is held by someone of an

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[10]Mascal, Theology and the Gospel of Christ, 201.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Weinandy, Does God Change?, 28.

"evangelical" persuasion. This thesis is evidence that such is not the case. What is being claimed is that there are evangelical scholars on these issues *who have demonstrated the Biblical basis and logical coherence of their position.* Certain forms of divine passibility can fall within the pale of orthodoxy because evangelical scholars have argued the case in an articulate and Biblically based manner.[13]

Finally, Clark's exegesis of I John 1:1-4 should be carefully examined. John says that what he proclaimed he himself heard, saw, and beheld with his hands. That which is proclaimed is the Word of Life (v. 1). Clark acknowledges that the "second person of the Trinity is the subject of John's declaration."[14] But he objects that the second person of the Trinity cannot be seen, heard, or handled. Clark assembles a number of passages to demonstrate that the verbs "see" and "hear" and references to "eyes" can have figurative meanings in Scripture and concludes "the language of I John does not necessarily, nor plausibly, refer to sensation and empiricism."[15] The immediate problem is that simply because the verbs "see" and "hear" can have figurative meanings is not

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[13]One example would be D. A. Carson, How Long, O' Lord? (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1990), chap 10.

[14]Gordon Clark, Clark Speaks from the Grave (Jefferson, Md.: The Trinity Foundation, 1986), 25.

[15]Ibid., 27. He goes so far as to say, "Clearly the very to *see* does not always, perhaps not even usually, refer to sensation." Ibid., 28. This is stretching the evidence too far.

in itself evidence that they *must* be figurative in I John. John can use "see" to mean empirically see with the eyes (John 20:18, 25). The New Testament testifies to the importance of the eyewitnesses of the events of Jesus' life (Acts 1:2; 4:20; John 19:35; II Pet 1:16). But Clark contends that in I John the object which is referred to is a proposition, namely, God is light. "The object, namely, the Word of Life, the Reason, and Wisdom of God, is not a physical object and cannot be literally seen and handled."[16] This confuses matters considerably. The divine nature of the Son is invisible but it is the very heart of the incarnation that this divine person has become *manifested in the flesh.* John proclaims that "the life was manifested." It was the life that was with the Father which "was manifested to us." It is certainly true that it was the human nature (i.e., his human body) that the apostles saw, heard, and handled. But this was the human body of God and so, therefore, in seeing Jesus they saw God and not merely a man indwelt by God. Prior to the incarnation the Second Person of the Trinity was invisible but the point of the passage and the entire focus of the incarnation is that God is now revealed in flesh. *To touch Jesus is to touch God the Son* (not in his divinity but in his humanity). Aquinas says,

> And, clearly, the body of Christ even after the union was not the very divinity of the Word; for the body of Christ even after the union could be touched, could be seen with

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[16]Ibid., 29

> bodily eyes, and had distinctly outlined members. All of these are foreign to the divinity of the Word, as the foregoing make clear.[17]

O'Collins agrees, "Far from merely appearing in a human form, the Word undergoes a genuine incarnation; through the flesh he can be truly seen and touched."[18]

It has perhaps become commonplace for evangelicals to speak of "God incarnate" and to say "Jesus is God". The words roll from our lips with little thought to its significance. We have lost the true wonder and magnificence of what is being claimed. It is a thought which should do nothing less than stagger the mind and humble the heart. The Christian who neglects thoughtful contemplation of the person of Jesus does so at his own demise.

There is, however, little that is impressive with a two-person Christology. What Clark has advocated in The Incarnation has been known historically known as Nestorianism. But Clark says the charge of heresy against Nestorius cannot be logically or historically sustained. The question remains to be asked and answered: Is Clark Nestorian? We preface our remarks with an important observation. What if Nestorius was innocent of a two-person Christology? It only proves that Cyril and others misunderstood Nestorius. It does not prove that their objections were wrong. In clearing Nestorius we do not necessarily validate a two-person Christology.

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[17]Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, Book 4.35.3.

[18]O'Collins. Christology. 174

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Clark was no stranger to controversy. But even in the most controversial period of his life William Young says "no one dreamed of bringing charges of heresy against a stalwart champion for the faith."[1] The implication of this thesis is this is now the case. Clark, in advocating a two-person Christology, is advancing a position which has historically been considered a heresy.

Clark anticipated the charge of Nestorianism:

> Some unfriendly critics will instantly brand the following defense of Christ's humanity as the heresy of Nestorianism. Nestorius, you remember from the early pages of this study, taught, or was supposed to have taught, that the Incarnation of the Logos resulted in two persons. This view of Nestorius, with its accompanying condemnation, cannot be sustained logically or historically. As for the history, several scholars assign the heretical view to his followers, who supposedly developed his suggestions beyond his approval. Nor can the charge of heresy be logically sustained. The reason should have become obvious pages ago. Neither Nestorius nor his opponents had any clear idea of what a *person* is. They used the word by attached no meaning to it. In their discussion and writings the term was as much nonsense syllables as *substance* and *nature*. However distasteful it may be to those students whose knowledge is confined to fifteen minutes of a broader lecture in the Systematic Theology class, and all the more distasteful to the professor who knows little more than those fifteen minutes, they must be forced to

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[1]William Young, "Absolute Truth," in Gordon H. Clark: Personal Recollections, ed. John Robbins (Jefferson, Md.: The Trinity Foundation, 1989), 116.

acknowledge that the Chalcedonian bishops and the later theologians were talking non-sense, because their terms had no sense at all.[2]

Many scholars have assigned the position of Nestorius to his followers and held that Nestorius was orthodox. But this opinion is not new. In 1940 R. V. Sellers said Nestorius was undeserving of the title Nestorianism.[3] In The Incarnation Clark implies that modern scholarship as absolved Nestorius of any heretical position.[4] While there is a growing consensus about the orthodoxy of Nestorius it is not unanimous. Furthermore, it is not as if Nestorius was entirely blameless in being misunderstood. Alan Richardson

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[2]Clark, The Incarnation, 75.

[3]R. V. Sellers, Two Ancient Christologies (London: SPCK, 1940), 164.

[4]It is ironic that Clark appeals to this "modern" opinion of Nestorius while showing little awareness of other contemporary Nestorian research. He cites Cassian as a source, however unreliable, of information about Nestorius. But contemporary scholarship has made such references to secondary literature unnecessary. Furthermore, Clark indicates his reliance on old information by giving the death of Nestorius as "sometime after A.D. 440." The Incarnation, 10. Clark may be relying on Hodge, Systematic Theology, vol II, 402, "Ultimately Nestorius was deposed and banished, and died A. D. 440," or Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church vol 3, 728, "He [Nestorius] . . . died after 439, no one knows when." Current scholarship is agreed that Nestorius lived at least till 451 A.D. since he "gave his approval to the *Tome* of Leo." Meyendorff, Christ in Eastern Christian Tradition, 33. See also Angelo Di Berardino, ed. Encyclopedia of the Early Church (New York: University Press, 1992), s.v. "Nestorius - Nestorianism," by M. Simonetti. "He survived until the council of Chalcedon (451)." For those who may argue that Clark is technically correct since 451 is "sometime after" 440. The statement makes as much sense as saying John F. Kennedy died sometime after 1948. Clark's statement is an indication that not all his sources were current.

notes that Nestorius, "by his tactless behavior, his old-fashioned terminology and unguarded statements, was to a large extent responsible for the mistake."[5] Nonetheless Richardson concurs that "The Church was undoubtedly right in condemning Nestorianism, even if she was wrong in fathering the theory upon poor, maligned Nestorius."[6] McGuckin describes one of Nestorius' complaints,

> Similarly, for Nestorius, it is wholly inappropriate to say: 'The *Logos* died on a cross,' because if he is truly the Word of God then he is immortal and so cannot possibly die. . . . Attempts by Christians to cross-exchange language categories (the so-called *communicatio idiomatum*) were fundamentally misguided in Nestorius' eyes, and were to be avoided by the intelligent.'[7]

For Nestorius the attributes of divinity or humanity were to be strictly attributed to the "prosopon of each nature as appropriate."[8] Nestorius' Christology is complex, subtle, and, at times, confusing. He clearly wanted to avoid the charge of two Sons. But the way in which he spoke about "the man Jesus" appeared to many of his critics as an "unavoidable lapse into a double-subject Christology."[9] In the midst of this complicated debate McGuckin appeals to the insightful

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[5]Alan Richardson, Creeds in the Making (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1935), 77.

[6]Ibid.

[7]John A. McGuckin, "The Christology of Nestorius of Constantinople," The Patristic and Byzantine Review 7 (1988), 113.

[8]Ibid., 114.

[9]Ibid., 126.

opinion of H. E. W. Turner:

> Nestorius' failure did not lie in positing a double personality in Christ, but in being unable to offer a convincing explanation, on his logical terms, of why there should *not* have been one.[10]

The result of this is simply a matter of appropriate labels. Whether we call a "two-person" Christology Nestorianism, or Mopsuestianism (after Theodore of Mopsuestia) the content remains the same. It is the content which is ultimately what the church finds objectionable not the label it wears.

Clark contends that Nestorius is not guilty of heresy because "neither Nestorius nor his opponents had any clear idea of what a *person* is." As was demonstrated in chapters one and two it is not necessary to be able to give precise definitions of terms in order to have some idea of what is meant by them.[11] Surely, Nestorius and his opponents had *something* in mind when they spoke of "person."[12] But while terminology was critical the ideas were expressed in a variety of ways and with terms other than "person."

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[10]Ibid., 129.

[11]Frame, Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought, observes "Scripture itself often fails to be precise about the mysteries of the faith." And, "On an orthodox view, Scripture is always *true*, but it is not always maximally *precise*." 69 & 69n20,

[12]Speaking of one who pre-dated Nestorius and his opponents Grillmeier says, "This does not mean that Apollinarius did not grasp or at least have an inkling of the idea of 'person' and 'unity of person' in Christ." Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol 1, 338.

If Jesus is not God Himself but only a man, no matter the degree of his intimacy with God, we are left with only a man; and the work he accomplished on the cross is only that of a man with no more efficacy to cover the sins of the world than the death of any other man. In short, we are still lost in our sins. The Christian doctrine of substitutionary atonement requires that Jesus be God and man in one person. John Stott says, "There is neither harsh injustice nor unprincipled love nor Christological heresy in that; there is only unfathomable mystery."[13] Lest we be accused of hiding behind the term "mystery" Russell Aldwinckle reminds us, "While it is bad theology to invoke mystery as an excuse for intellectual laziness, it is equally foolish and arrogant to refuse to recognize genuine mystery when we meet it."[14] As Calvin and Augustine taught there is a "certain learned ignorance."[15] It is only the devout heart that knows when to stop the overly curious mind from delving into things too deep for its own good. Those who insist on knowing *everything* about the incarnation suffer the danger of either so

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[13]John Stott, The Cross of Christ (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 159.

[14]Aldwinckle, More Than a Man: A Study in Christology, 191.

[15]Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, III.21.2. "Rather, let us willingly refrain from inquiring into a kind of knowledge, the ardent desire for which is both foolish and dangerous, nay, even deadly." Calvin's discussion is that of predestination. The thought is, however, equally applicable here.

domesticating it that there will be nothing left worthy of worship or turning it so much into mystery that it won't be comprehensible. The church has struggled, albeit imperfectly, to find that fine line.

So where does all this leave Clark? Like Nestorius, his language is difficult to discern. He insists on referring to the "man" Jesus as a human person and a subject of attributes separate from that of the Logos. One would be hard-pressed to convince Cyril that this is not *Nestorius-revividus*.

Virtually the only major writer to deal with Clark has been Carl F. H. Henry.[16] He says Clark's view "sets the discussion of Chalcedon in new focus."[17] He continues,

> Clark seems to avow what was only implicit in Nestorian theory, two natures with personal independence. But Clark speaks also of a duality of persons in Christ, yet does so only in the context of a highly specific definition of person. . . . Moreover, he sees propositions in terms of living mind and not in terms of merely abstract or static phenomena.[18]

Care must be exercised here lest we repeat the

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[16]Henry, The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth, 106-7; 110-11. William A. Sailar gives a review article of Clark's book in the Evangelical Journal 7 (1989): 51-56. At one point he compares Clark's Christology to that of Russelism because "the Watchtower has taught that Jesus was a man, a human person, quite distinguishable from deity." 54. Any Christology, however, should be judged in light of all its features not just some. Russel did not view the Logos as being equal to God but a part of creation. Clark's belief in the full deity of the Logos is sufficient to distinguish it from Russelism.

[17]Henry, The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth, 110.

[18]Ibid., 111.

Alexandrian/Antiochene controversy. That is, both sides saying roughly the same thing with different terminology and each with a different emphasis.[19] Henry's comments imply that Clark is orthodox though speaking in language foreign or different (more precise?) than that of Chalcedon.

There are two problems with Henry's comment. First, it does not explain why Clark chose *now* to speak of two persons in Christ. This is significant since the "highly specific definition" of person has remained the same throughout Clark's career. Henry's comment would carry more force if Clark had changed his definition and *now* in light of this new definition Clark can validly speak of two persons. But such is not the case. In all his writings previous to The Incarnation Clark spoke of Christ as *one person* and charged people with Nestorianism who held to a two-person theory and all the while his definition of person was the same. This point must not be missed. If Clark alleged that Nestorianism (understood in its historic sense) was heresy while he held to the same definition of person as he did in The Incarnation, then by what logic can Henry claim that by understanding the

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[19]"Clark accused Van Til of denying the Trinity. Frame demonstrates in what sense it may be orthodox to say "God is one person and three persons." Frame, Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought, 65-71. Briefly, the word person is used to refer to two different things. Since the Greeks could refer to God as three substances and the Latins could refer to Him as one substance, then it is orthodox, in a manner of speaking, to say God is one substance and three substances. The resolution is that the same word was understood differently by the parties involved. Frame believes Van Til must be understood accordingly.

specific nature of Clark's definition of person the situation will be clarified?

Secondly, Clark's "highly specific definition of person" does not alleviate the single biggest difficulty: the human person is a subject of attribution independent of the Logos. Clark continually forces the reader to think of the "man" Jesus with the fullest possible connotations of a complete, individual, and independent person *other than* the Logos. *This "man" is not to be identified with the Logos.* When Robbins writes, "Jesus Christ was and is both God and man" it is quickly followed by "a divine person and a human person." The constant distinction between the two disrupts any thought of unity of person. Clark's emphasis on the *man* Jesus viewed as separate from the Logos and as an independent subject of attribution, fully possessing all the essential attributes of humanity to include a human soul which is equivalent to a human person (in the sense applied to any other human person) make it very difficult to see how this is not Nestorianism.

This conclusion is not an easy one. It is painful to conclude that a man who gave so much to the church has erred on such a significant doctrine in so significant a way. The doctrine of an "impersonal human nature" is required to make sense of the data of Scripture which identify Jesus as God (not God *simpliciter*) Himself made flesh. Though many are constantly reminding us that the doctrine of an impersonal

human nature is easily misunderstood this is equally true of other orthodox doctrines. Chalcedon paved the way for future generations to think seriously about who Jesus is. It is a guide for those who must responsibly translate theology into terms that can be understood by the contemporary audience. But care must be exercised to ensure that the terms used to translate the truth of Scripture do not carry philosophical implications which are antithetical to the very truth they seek to convey.

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." The words of any language only suffer as they try to capture the miracle of the incarnation. It is only natural that the works of God should bewilder the finite mind. The church struggles to understand the logic of the incarnation. Its complexity, however, must not distract from its beauty. At the end of the day understanding must give way to worship. When the mind has done all it can do and mystery will permit no further probing, the heart can bow in humble adoration. God's scars will forever be a reminder of the price paid for our salvation.

APPENDIX 1

Creedal and Conciliar Statements on the Person of Christ

Chalcedon (451)	Made known in two natures . . . the property of each nature being preserved and coalescing in one prosopon
Fourth Lateran Council (1215)	Jesus Christ . . . made true man, composed of a rational soul and human flesh, one person in two natures . . . though immortal and impassible in His divinity He yet became subject to suffering and death in His humanity
Augsburg Confession (1530)	the Son of God, took unto him man's nature . . . so that there are two natures . . . inseparably joined together in unity of person
French Confession Faith (1559)	We believe that in one person, that is, Jesus Christ, the two natures are actually and inseparably joined and united, and yet each remains in its proper character
Belgic Confession (1561)	We believe . . . the person of the Son is inseparably united and connected with the human nature; so that there are not two Sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person; yet each nature retains its own distinct properties
Second Helvitic Confession (1566)	in one and the same Jesus Christ our Lord two natures--the divine and the human and nature, and we say that these two are so conjoined or united that they are not swallowed up, confounded, or mingled together; but rather united or joined together in one person (the properties of each nature being safe and remaining still)

Formula of Concord (1576)	That the divine and the human nature in Christ are personally united, and so completely that there are not two Christs . . . but that one and the same is Son of God and Son of Man (Lk i.35; Rom ix.5)
Saxon Visitation Articles (1592)	These two natures are personally so united that there is but one Christ and one person
The Irish Articles of Religion (1615)	The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, . . . took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance, so that two whole and perfect natures--that is to say, the Godhead and manhood--were inseparably joined in one person, making one Christ very God and very man.
Westminster Confession (1647)	The Son of God . . . [did] take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties . . . So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion.
Confession of the Waldenses (1655)	That there are two natures in Jesus Christ, viz., divine and human, truly united in one and the same person, without confusion, division, separation, or alteration; each nature keeping its own distinct properties
39 Articles of the Church of England (1801)	The Son . . . took Man's nature . . . so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person

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