

## ***Early Church - Question 1***

### *Introduction*

As Aloys Grillmeier astutely observes, “soteriology remained the actual driving force behind theological inquiry, even – as we shall see especially in the period from the third to the fifth century – behind reflection on the identity of Christ.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, before addressing the specifics of questions about the incarnation and the two natures of Christ, it is necessary first to explore the soteriologies of Irenaeus of Lyon and Athanasius of Alexandria. This essay will first review the theologians in question before moving on to compare and contrast their developments on the concept of the two natures of Christ as it reflects their soteriologies.

### *Irenaeus - Bishop of Lyon - 135-200 C.E.*

Irenaeus’ doctrine of incarnation presupposes his soteriology; his arguments about the incarnation and the degree to which Christ is human and the degree to which he is divine stem from his belief that Christ saves. As will be seen, this leads Irenaeus to support his theology with some occasionally circular arguments.

Irenaeus lays out the soteriological reasons for the incarnation: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became the Son of man, so that “man also might become the son of God.” (III, 10, 2)<sup>2</sup> Because humankind is under the power of sin, it cannot save itself from such sin, therefore the Word arranged to come in the flesh to win back to God “that human nature (*hominem*) which had departed from God.” (III, 10, 2) Irenaeus follows the apostle Paul’s lead in this matter, arguing

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<sup>1</sup> Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451), Vol 1* (Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1975) 2nd edition, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, translated by Philip Schaff. Public domain. Kindle edition, ASIN B004HD5XWQ. Citations refer to Book, Chapter, paragraph.

that Christ became a second Adam, imitating the first by becoming flesh, embodied, and thus intimately connected with humanity. (II, 22, 4)

It is important to preface a description of Irenaeus' understanding of the two natures of Christ by noting that he was compelled to argue on two fronts in order to defend his understanding of the incarnation. In *Against Heresies* (written after 180 C.E.), he works to disprove the Gnostic arguments regarding the nature of Christ and God. The Gnostics were struggling with how to "reconcile the finite with the infinite," and so the intimate relationship of God and the Son was problematic for them. (Preface) To refute them, Irenaeus builds up his argument around a proper understanding of the relationship between God and Christ, and between the unity of the divine and human within Christ. In *Against Heresies*, he relies on the textual witness of Scripture (by which he means select verses of the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Pauline epistles) to prove the truth of his arguments against the "heretics" that God the Father and the Son are indeed together. He is also arguing against the Docetists, who want to deny any connection whatsoever between the divine and the human, arguing that God only appears to take on a human body, but does not actually do so. Since Irenaeus is convinced that only God *as human* can save humans, he must explain how it is that God was human in reality, and not just in appearance.

Despite Irenaeus' attempts to develop a Christology based on the unity of Logos and flesh in Christ, Grillmeier observes that that he does not develop a technical two-natures doctrine of God.<sup>3</sup> Unlike those who come after him, although he insists that Jesus has a human body, he does not insist on the presence of his human soul.<sup>4</sup> That is not to say that he insists on its absence, but

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<sup>3</sup> Grillmeier, 101.

<sup>4</sup> Roger Haight, *Jesus, Symbol of Christ* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999) 251.

simply that he does not address it with any intention. (Although he does claim in III, 22, 1 that humans have bodies from the earth and souls “receiving spirit from God.”)

Irenaeus develops his argument for Christ’s humanity as he seeks to refute the Docetic heresy that Christ was never really human. Based on his presupposition that Christ saves, he argues that Christ can only save if he is really flesh. Since he did save, that means he must have taken on flesh, characteristics of which includes suffering. (III, 28) While the argument may be circular, Irenaeus nevertheless insists that the “formation of God” is human, and that, being taken up in the Word, he became visible, comprehensible, and capable of suffering. (III, 26, 6) As a human, Christ ate, hungered, was tired, wept, sweated blood, grieved, and put forth blood and water when his side was pierced on the cross. (III, 22) As Haight notes, by emphasizing the “fully human” nature of Jesus, Irenaeus is making Christ “the archetypal human being.”<sup>5</sup>

Irenaeus, like those who follow him, argues that the move from Christ to the body, and from the body to us, is one-way. Christ transformed sinful humans through becoming human, but was not transformed himself by becoming human. In that way, the impassability of God is still protected, but humanity is not left to its sinful condition.

Finally, Irenaeus emphasizes the connection of Christ to history. While this does (not?) necessarily fall into the emphasis that Christ was human, it does connect him with the flow of history and thus establishes his concrete-ness. By citing Scripture from the Old Testament typologically, Irenaeus is refuting the claim of the “heretics” that Christ is completely transcendent and not connected to humanity in any way. Rather, he is arguing that the pre-existent Christ is nevertheless part of history, past (as witnessed in the Old Testament) and

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<sup>5</sup> Haight, 218.

present, and thus connects “God, Christ, and salvation.”<sup>6</sup> (Insofar as salvation is viewed as a salvation history, with a soteriological narrative running through the entire Bible from Creation with the pre-existent Word, through the Old Testament and the prophets and psalms, into the apex of Christ in the Gospels and epistles, culminating in the eschatological resurrection.)

To describe Irenaeus’ understanding of Christ’s humanity simply, summarizing Haight’s observations: Irenaeus argues that Jesus Christ must be human, or else humans could not be redeemed by him, and that Jesus Christ must be divine (i.e. the Son of God) or else God could not be in relationship with humankind.<sup>7</sup> In Christ, the two are united, but the details of that union Irenaeus does not explicitly explain.

In order to successfully argue that the Word came to save humankind, and can do so because it is the Word and not human, Irenaeus must prove that the Word is pre-existent. Thus, using imagery from the opening to the Gospel of John, he states that God is the creator of all things *through Christ*, known (and thus proven) by the tradition of the apostles, and that God is “together with His Word” called God and Lord, a title which is applicable only to those who were not created by God, and thus only to God Father and Son. (III, 4, 8)

As the pre-existent Word, Christ comes to be the “hand” of God, who is involved directly in the world, both through creation and then through incarnation. This mediation occurs within the process of incarnation, where incarnation “represents the unity of God with humanity.”<sup>8</sup> By emphasizing the degree to which Christ is in relation with the Father, Irenaeus is emphasizing Christ’s divinity. Aware of the danger of insisting too strongly that Christ is a man, Irenaeus

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<sup>6</sup> Grillmeier, 101.

<sup>7</sup> Haight, 251.

<sup>8</sup> Richard A. Norris, translator and editor, *The Christological Controversy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 11-12.

argues that Christ was not *merely* man. Although Christ was born of the virgin Mary, making him the Son of Man, he was also begotten by God, making him divine. As the Son of Man, he is called God-with us, and as the Word, he is called God.

Moving to the relationship between the human and divine in Christ, and how they are distinct, Irenaeus implicitly ascribes to a kind of subordinationism theory of the relationship between the Father and the Son, in which the Father is set above the Son. In III, 5, 3, Irenaeus writes that the Son descends “from heaven in His Father’s power ... [and] shall freely give the good things of God,” implying a hierarchy of Father and Son. Further, Irenaeus never explicitly refers to the Word as God, but only to him as the Son of God, or as the “formation of God.” This omission is not easily explained, particularly given his heretical opponents’ taunts that Christ was not God. Yet Christ continues to act on his own, voluntarily serving as a mediator between God and humankind through his incarnation: Christ “condescended to be born of the virgin, He Himself uniting man through himself to God.” (III, 4, 2)

Irenaeus also describes the distinction between the human and divine functionally. Citing the Gospel of Matthew, as well as the prophets, and relying particularly on the baptism in the Jordan as the moment par excellence demonstrating the relationship between the divine and human, Irenaeus explains that as man, the Word of God was anointed by the Spirit of God, but as God, the Word forgave and freed people from bondage and did not need to be witnessed by humans to prove his divinity. In baptism, an important hermeneutical lens for Irenaeus, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus who was the Christ. The alternate interpretation, that Christ descended upon the man and made him holy, or that Jesus became the Christ in baptism, is here disputed, as Irenaeus works to refute a number of heresies at the same time.

To argue that the divine and the human are united in Christ, Irenaeus begins by establishing that God and the Father (of Christ) are one and the same, in order to avoid splitting Jesus up into a “dispensational Jesus” and the “Christ of the Pleroma,” as the Gnostics do (particularly those who follow Valentinus). The Pleroma was the Gnostic concept of a world that existed between God and the human world. The Gnostic Christ lived here as an “aeon,” who descended to the lower world to unite with Jesus.<sup>9</sup> By equating the one whom the Gospels tell of and the one whom Christians worship with the same one who created all things, Irenaeus is disputing the Gnostic claim. There is only one God, and that same God is the Father, the Creator, and is object of Christian worship. However, he does not argue that the Son of God is equal to God, leading one to question whether he is, again, displaying a kind of subordination of Jesus to God.

*Athanasius - Bishop of Alexandria - 299(?) - 373 (May 3) C.E.*

To understand Athanasius’ view on incarnation, it is necessary first to understand his soteriology. Athanasius himself argued that “you must understand why it is that the Word of the Father, so great and so high, has been made manifest in bodily form.” (§1)<sup>10</sup> The reason, he claimed, is “for this reason only, out of the love and goodness of His Father, for the salvation of us men.” (§1) Thus, his treatise, *On the Incarnation*, begins with the clear establishment that the Word made flesh is also the Word at creation, the one through whom creation was made, clearly linking creation, incarnation, and salvation.

The reason that salvation is necessary is because God established death for disobedience,

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<sup>9</sup> Grillmeier, 98-99.

<sup>10</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998). Citations refer to section.

but also established life in Creation, which then disobeyed. Since God cannot contravene what God has established, and yet cannot allow humankind to cease to exist (which would deny God's goodness), there is a dilemma. Only someone who was at Creation – the Word – can restore incorruption and accomplish the proper re-creation. “For this purpose, then, the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God entered our world.” (§8) By taking on a human body which dies, death being the chief characteristic of human bodies, the death of the embodied Word, being the Word and not merely human, will overcome the death of all and abolish it.

This process takes place through an exchange. The Word's body carries the same weight as all bodies, and through solidarity with all human bodies, the voluntary death of that body is offered in exchange for all the death of all human bodies. Likewise, the resurrection of the Word's body will lead to the resurrection of all. “For by sacrifice of His own body He did two things: He put an end to the law of death which barred our way; and He made a new beginning of life for us, by giving us the hope of resurrection.” (§10) The body of the Word is able to accomplish both exchange resurrection because it is the body of the incorruptible Word.

Having established the soteriological necessity for the incarnation of the pre-existent Logos in a human body, we will now turn to Athanasius' understanding of the incarnation itself.

The focus of Christology for Athanasius was the Logos. According to Jaroslav Pelikan's division of those who fall within the camp of the *hypostatic union* and those who are in the camp of the *indwelling Logos*,<sup>11</sup> Athanasius is clearly in the former. Grillmeier describes the division as that between the “Logos-*sarx*” Christologies and the “Logos-*anthropos*” Christologies,<sup>12</sup> where

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<sup>11</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: the Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* Vol 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 247.

<sup>12</sup> Grillmeier, 218.

*sarx* indicates a view of the human component of Christ as simply a human body with no soul (or a soul that is replaced by the Logos), while *anthropos* is an argument for the more active presence of the human body, including a human soul for Christ. In Grillmeier's schema, Athanasius belongs to the first group.

It is worth noting that for Athanasius, the particulars of the Word's body (i.e. that it was Jewish) are irrelevant. The only important things about the human body of the Logos is that a) it was sinless and thus not corruptible (i.e. inevitably prone to death) and that b) this body nevertheless died. This moment of death is where Athanasius focuses his attention when it comes to the humanity of Christ. It is in the death of the body on the cross that the world primarily sees the evidence that Christ was indeed in a human body. Athanasius is quite clear at this point, arguing against any Docetic understandings, that "the body of the Word, then, being a real human body ... was of itself mortal and, like other bodies liable to death." However, "the indwelling of the Word loosed it from this natural liability, so that corruption could not touch it."<sup>13</sup> Thus, the body of the Word died, but not as the result of corruption, but because the Word took on the penalty of sin, which was death. Athanasius is able to bring the Logos into a human body without negative consequences for the body because he puts the soul (human or otherwise) on the backburner, considering it theologically irrelevant.<sup>14</sup> Since there is no soul to order the human body, the Logos is easily able to direct the body of Jesus without raising questions about the volition or will of Jesus in the whole matter.

The Logos "took up" the body of Jesus, and is the source of the actions of Jesus (including physical actions). The body thus functions as the mediator of these actions to the

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<sup>13</sup> Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms.

<sup>14</sup> Grillmeier, 308.



world. In death, the Logos separates from the body, and although Athanasius does say that “Christ on the cross was God,” the context of this statement is the biblical witness that physical miracles took place during the crucifixion (solar eclipse, earthquakes, landslides). It is not an attempt by Athanasius to claim that God dies on the cross. Instead, the Logos at this point undergoes some type of a separation, as it is later able to raise up the now deceased body. (§19) Because the Logos is incorruptible, and “takes on” the body, it bestows this incorruptibility on Jesus’ human body through resurrection.

Let us now turn to understanding the relationship between the divine and the human in Christ. Athanasius makes a point of arguing that although God is truly present in the incarnation as (or through) the Logos, the Logos in itself does not experience the physicality of what the body does, as far as pain, thirst, and hunger are concerned. There is no equality between the Word and the body, but instead a hierarchy. The Word formed its own body in the womb, caused this body to perform miracles that only God can do, and after death, the Word raised up his own body. (§26)

Athanasius acknowledges that the incarnation of the Logos poses a “paradox ... The Word was not hedged in by His body, nor did His presence in the body prevent His being present elsewhere as well. When He moved His body He did not cease also to direct the universe by His Mind and might.” Further, “His body was for Him not a limitation, but an instrument, so that He was both in it and in all things” ... “At one and the same time—this is the wonder—as Man he was living a human life, and as Word He was sustaining the life of the universe.” (§17) The body of Jesus functions as the physical instrument of the Logos in the world, and is directed by the Logos. (§17) Athanasius writes frequently in such a way that the body is the passive agent of the

Word, in order to protect the independence and incorruptibility of the Word. He explains the nature of the Incarnation by first arguing that becoming embodied did not lessen the transcendence of the Word outside of materiality. The process of the Incarnation is a one-way transformation, the Word coming into the human, and transforming humankind, but the act is not reciprocal; the body does not transform the Word: “His being in everything does not mean that He shares the nature of everything, only that He gives all things their being and sustains them in it.” (§18) In this way, Athanasius avoids the implication that the Word could become corrupt by taking on human nature, but also avoids any strict division between the Word and the Father. In so doing, he establishes a *distinction*, but not a separation, between the body of the Word and the Word itself.

Athanasius’ exploration of what happens during the death of Christ gives insight into how he understands the relationship between the *sarx* and the Logos. Grillmeier states that “for Christ, death means the separation of body and Logos.” When the Logos left the body, it died, and after death, the Logos descended to Hades, but the body stayed in the tomb.<sup>15</sup> There is a clear separation between the Logos and the body at death, and Athanasius goes so far as to say, in the *Letter to Epictetus* that “the body was not the Word, but the body of the Word.”<sup>16</sup>

While Athanasius maintains the unity of Christ in that the Word “took to Himself a body .... Nor did He will merely to become embodied or merely to appear .... No, He took *our* body” (§8), he also insists on the primacy of the Logos in the body. There is unity, but not equivalence. The incarnation is that of the full and true God, so that God is actively present with the people. According to Roch A. Kereszty, along with the Alexandrian school, Athanasius

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<sup>15</sup> Grillmeier, 316.

<sup>16</sup> Grillmeier, 316.

displayed a clear lack of emphasis on the “active autonomy of the humanity of Christ.”<sup>17</sup>

It is in his two chapters on “The Refutation of the Gentiles,” that Athanasius most clearly develops his understanding of the unity of Christ. Because he is trying to refute “the Gentile” argument that the divine cannot enter the human, or that it would be inappropriate, Athanasius argues that since the human body is a part of the universe, and since the Greek philosophers (whom the Gentiles esteem) argue that the the Word is present in the universe, the Word must also be present in the human body, which is part of the universe. Therefore, denying the appropriateness of the Word of God in the human body amounts to denying the appropriateness of the Word in the universe, and thus the extent of salvation. (§41)

### *Comparison*

Irenaeus’ soteriology determines that God must become the Son of Man so that man can become the Son of God. In order to defend this argument, he argues that Christ is God as the pre-existent Word who is not transformed by contact with the human nature, while Christ is human by taking on flesh through birth, suffering, dying, and experiencing the same things that humans do. In Athanasius’ soteriology, an exchange of the human body *par excellence* must be made in order to restore all of humanity to their original state of incorruption. Only someone who is divine can accomplish such an act, therefore the Logos, the divine Word of God, must become embodied in order to make such an exchange. This body must be sinless, in order to effect such an exchange. Both theologians require a restoration of humankind to God through the divine Son of God taking on human flesh, however the actual process of salvation results in different

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<sup>17</sup> Roch Kereszty, *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology* (Staten Island, N.Y.: St. Paul’s, 2002), 236.

perspectives on how that incarnation exists. Irenaeus relies on the image of Paul's second Adam to explore the idea that the divine presence brings about a transformation of humankind simply by uniting both in one body. This divine presence must be pre-existent, as truly divine, something Irenaeus and Athanasius have in common, but Irenaeus' Christ suffers, thirsts, hungers, and dies. Athanasius, on the other hand, separates the divine and human in Christ to such an extent that there is no suffering for Christ. This is because the exchange model for Athanasius requires a completely sinless human Christ as well as a Logos that is undeniably uncorrupted by its contact with human nature. This leads Athanasius to emphasize, in ways that Irenaeus did not, that the Logos separates from the body at death. In fact, it is this emphasis on death that marks the soteriological divide between Irenaeus and Athanasius, and explains the differences between their doctrines of the incarnation. Because Athanasius requires a voluntary divine death in exchange for all humankind, he argues for more of a separation between the two natures of Christ (without using this explicit language) in order to protect the actions of both the human and divine components of Christ. Irenaeus, on the other hand, is more interested in the transformative salvific possibilities that arise from an encounter of the human and divine in the one body, and so emphasizes neither the death of Christ, nor the separation of the two natures.

***Early Church - Question 2****Introduction*

We confess one and the same our Lord Jesus Christ, and we all teach harmoniously {that he is} the same perfect in godhead, the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same of a reasonable soul and body; homoousios with the Father in godhead, and the same homoousios with us in manhood, like us in all things except sin ... acknowledged in two natures without confusion, without change, without separation—the difference of the natures being by no means taken away because of the union, but rather the distinctive character of each nature being preserved, and {each} combining in one person and hypostasis—not divided or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God, Logos, Lord Jesus Christ...<sup>18</sup>

The Council of Chalcedon, with its definitive formula of faith, was a pivotal moment in the history of Christology for the way in which it encompassed the particularly Cyrillian Christology that had come before it, and shaped the christologies of the theologians who came after. This essay will examine the theology of Cyril of Alexandria, his (indirect) influence on Chalcedon, and conclude with an examination of how the Council influenced (or did not influence) the theology of Maximus the Confessor.

*Cyril - Bishop of Alexandria - 376/80-444(June 27), C.E.*

Before addressing Cyril's theology of the incarnation, it is relevant first to locate him within his historical context. Cyril was a contentious figure who, while foundational for influencing the doctrine of the incarnation, was also a volatile man who engaged in debate perhaps more out of passionate conviction than collected and reasoned thought. His acrimonious relationship with Nestorius is often used to frame the debates surrounding his view on the incarnation within the context of *Theotokos*, and so this section will also include a brief

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<sup>18</sup> Pelikan Vol 1., 263-264.

examination of Nestorius' theology insofar as Cyril was reacting to it.

Cyril of Alexandria was the nephew of Theophilus, and he succeeded his uncle to the patriarchy of Alexandria in 412 C.E., where he became known for his contributions to what has since become orthodox doctrine with the concept of the *hypostatic union* and his defense of *Theotokos* against Nestorius. He attempted to hold together the union of divine and human natures in the incarnation of Christ so that God remained the cause of salvation, but he was also emphatic that God's impassibility remain uncompromised, and so argued for one *physis* (actualizing essence), one *hypostasis* (ground of existence), but two *natures*. He was also remarkably well-known for being prone to violence in Alexandria, beginning his rule with participation in and encouragement of mob violence, first against the Novatians, then against the philosophers, and then against the Jewish community in Alexandria.<sup>19</sup> It is after these events, during the rise of general, religiously-oriented violence in the city, that in 416 C.E. Emperor Theodosius II restricted and took control of the numbers of Cyril's *parabalani* (attendants at the city's hospitals who also served as Cyril's mob enforcers). However, two years later, allegedly under the influence of Augusta Empress Pulcheria, Theodosius II raised the number of *parabalani* to six hundred and handed their control back to Cyril.<sup>20</sup> Thus it can be seen that although Cyril died before the convening of the Second Council of Ephesus (June 27, 444), his political and theological relationships with individuals connected to Ephesus II and to Chalcedon, particularly his positive relationship with Augusta Empress Pulcheria and Pope Leo and his negative relationship with Nestorius, ensured that he continued to remain a presence on

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<sup>19</sup> Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) 303-304.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) 100.

the theological stage long after his demise.

Nestorius of Constantinople is most simply described as the theological nemesis of Cyril and the instigator of the *Theotokos* debates. Personally chosen in April, 428 C.E. by Theodosius II to be the patriarch of Constantinople, he too began his ecclesial rule with a bang. Less than a week after being consecrated, Nestorius allegedly refused to commune Augusta Empress Pulcheria in the Holy of Holies, called her the “Mother of Satan,” and banned women’s leadership from certain services of the church.<sup>21</sup> Six months later he began preaching against *Theotokos*, evoking a strong reaction from Cyril and the Alexandrian school. While he was clearly misogynist, his rejection of *Theotokos* must be understood in the context of his opposition to any understanding of the incarnation that emphasized too greatly the divinity of Jesus (as *Theotokos* can) at the cost of Jesus’ humanity. From the beginning, his sermons against the elevation of Mary to the position of *Theotokos* and his rejection of overemphasis on the humanity of Christ prompted severe reaction. It took only a year before Nestorius and Cyril were at extreme odds.

On November 19, 430 C.E., Theodosius II issued a call for a Council to convene at Ephesus in June of the following year. The Council was a procedural debacle. Cyril, having been warned by the emperor to stop attempting to encroach on imperial family relationships through solicitous letter-writing to Empress Pulcheria, engaged in what can only be described as bullying and manipulation in order to have the Council declare Nestorius a heretic.<sup>22</sup> A counter-Synod was immediately convened that overturned the ruling against Nestorius and instead deposed Cyril. A

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<sup>21</sup> Holum, 154.

<sup>22</sup> Holum, 165-6. Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, editors, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, Three volumes (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), vol. 1, 20-22.

flurry of letters and complaints (and bribes) to the emperor descended on the imperial court in the weeks that followed, as each side claimed legitimacy for themselves and sought the emperor's endorsement.<sup>23</sup> By the fall of 431 C.E., Nestorius was returned to his monastery outside of Antioch, Cyril was restored to his position in Alexandria, and the Council was declared officially closed. Nestorius' excommunication was *not* approved, but neither was Cyril's. As will be seen, however, it was Cyril's theology that came to influence the outcomes of Chalcedon, as others took on his understanding of the divine and human natures of Christ.

*On the Unity of Christ* (435-440 C.E.) is the primary demonstration of Cyril's theology of the two natures of Christ.<sup>24</sup> It is framed as a response to two groups who tried to "drag down" Christ from divine status by "denying consubstantiality" of Christ and God, either by denying its existence prior to the incarnation, or denying its existence during the incarnation.

Responding primarily to the latter issue, Cyril frames his argument against "they" (by which the reader is probably meant to assume that he is referring to Nestorius) as a rebuttal of those who deny that Mary is the Mother-of-God. He interprets their denial to mean, ultimately, that because the Word is God and God is preexistent, but Mary was not, she cannot therefore be the Mother-of-God. Having set up this somewhat inflated debate partner (later Nestorian scholarship debates whether or not this was really Nestorius' intention or simply Cyril's hyperbole),<sup>25</sup> Cyril argues with the above logic, writing that since Mary did give birth to

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<sup>23</sup> Price, Volume 1, 23. That there was an extreme famine and heat wave during this summer is perhaps not irrelevant to the hostility displayed by all present. Jeanne Tsatsou, *Empress Athenais-Eudocia, a Fifth Century Byzantine Humanist* (Brookline, Mass: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1977), 46.

<sup>24</sup> Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995). Citations refer to page numbers of this edition.

<sup>25</sup> See Hagit Amirav, "Political and Social Networks in the Council of Chalcedon: The Imperial Commission," *Studia Patristica* XLV (2010):139-145 and Richard Price, "Marian Piety and the Nestorian Controversy," in *The Church and Mary* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2004) for contrasting viewpoints.



someone, “they” (meaning his opponents) must conclude that that someone, named Emmanuel, God-with-us, must not be God. But, since Emmanuel *is* God-with-us, “they” are wrong. We know that Emmanuel is God-with-us because he is flesh, i.e. us, and since the Word became flesh, the Word became us, and hence Emmanuel.

As other theologians during his period did, Cyril bases his incarnation theology in a soteriological context. That is, Cyril argues that the Word was incarnated to redeem humanity, and if the Word is not incarnated, we continue to be unredeemed. However, since we are redeemed, that is proof that the Word was incarnated. It is not enough that the one to redeem creation is a “man assumed by the Logos,” instead, “the Savior had to be the Logos himself.”<sup>26</sup> Cyril’s argument is based on the understanding that salvation cannot come through human action, but only through divine. The process of redemption occurs as our bodies are saved from passibility (i.e. corruption and death) through the transformation of our soul by Christ’s soul (which Pelikan argues is deification), reflecting the Neo-platonic privileging of the mind that continued to shape theological thinking.<sup>27</sup>

Cyril then goes to explain how it is that the Word became flesh. In doing so, he relies on John 1:14 as his hermeneutical lens for understanding Incarnation. First, he argues that “became” does not imply change. God did not change what God was before, because God is “immutable and unalterable.” (54) Rather, the Word adopted a new state, “appropriating” flesh without changing into flesh. This process occurred through divine kenosis, by which the Word “submitted himself to being emptied,” and then taking on a human body.

It is important for Cyril to emphasize that this body is “not soulless ... but rather animated

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<sup>26</sup> Pelikan, vol. 1, 234.

<sup>27</sup> Pelikan, vol. 1, 233.

with a rational soul,” (55) as the inclusion of a soul both emphasizes the Word’s human nature, but also caused problems vis-a-vis the soul and the will in later debates. This body also hungered and tired, and thus Cyril can say that the Word hungered and tired, as the Word took on the body and “made it his own.” (55-56)

In taking on flesh, the Word transformed it so that it did not suffer sin and corruption and remain dead. However, the divine nature of the Word remained “invisible” in the body, (58) and the Word limited himself to the limits of the human body when he took on flesh. Indeed, in order to take on the title of Christ, the Word could only take this title on after he was incarnated as a man, as the title does not apply to God, but only to humans. Therefore, to say that Christ is pre-existent is inaccurate. Rather, one must speak of the Word as pre-existent.

While the Word “takes on” human nature for soteriological reasons, the Word’s “own nature” is that of God. (60) In this way, Cyril argues that the Word was one nature prior to the incarnation, that nature being divine. After all, if the Word had a human nature prior to the incarnation, he could hardly have been said to take on flesh. Since the Word did indeed do this, logically this also means that prior to the incarnation, the Word was not like us, but had a completely different nature. Since, for Cyril, there are only two natures, divine and human, that nature must have been divine.

Cyril’s development of the distinction of the human and divine comes out of his response to “they” who believe that *union* means that God and the Word are one to the degree that everything that applies to Jesus Christ applies to God. Since this intrudes upon the impassibility of God, there cannot truly be a union. Cyril’s response is that only the incarnated Word takes on human characteristics, which is why there is a differentiation between the Son and the Father.

That is, it is the economy of salvation that redeems human. Thus Cyril engages in very nuanced discourse about the incarnation of the Word. On the one hand he insists that the Word took on human nature, including the rational soul, but on the other hand he refers to the Word's "own nature" as distinct from ours. But what is a human with a nature that is different from ours and yet the same? Here we have the beginnings of the most sophisticated discussion on the Incarnation to date, with Cyril proposing that there is one *physis* and one *hypostasis* of the Word made flesh, but two natures. That is, prior to the incarnation there are "two distinct beings" or essences, Godhood and manhood (a concept Grillmeier attributes to Cyril's use of Apollinarianism).<sup>28</sup> But after the incarnation, the two come together in such a way that there is Christ, with two natures. In other words, a hypostatic union.

To be more explicit about the distinction between the pre-incarnation Word and the incarnated Christ, while still maintaining the idea of unity, Cyril denies that in the actions of the incarnate Word, some are accomplished by the divine and some by the human. However, he also does not believe it appropriate to say, for instance, that the Word tired. Rather, it is more accurate to say that the Word-made-flesh tired, and grew, and suffered temptation, and died. (106-107) (Although he did not sin, or become sin, naturally.)

However, Cyril asserts, despite his emphasis on two natures, that the Word became flesh "in such an indissoluble union that it has to be considered as his very own body and no one else's." (63) In other words, incarnation is more than mere relationship between the human and divine, and it is more than even an inseparable "conjoining." (73) Both of these terms still apply a degree of separation that is unacceptable to Cyril. Instead, he proposes that union is

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<sup>28</sup> Grillmeier, 476.

“concurrence in one reality.”(73) This is not to be confused with homogeneity, because it involves “different kinds of things,” by which Cyril means the divine and human natures. (73) Cyril is adamant that two things that are “equal in honor” cannot be united as one, but must stand next to each other. Union must involve unequal parties. Further, Cyril argues that since we speak of “uniting” the two, it must mean that there were two to begin with, or there would be no need of union. Furthermore, the Word did not put on a human body like one puts on a set of clothes, because that would be an addition, and not a union. At the same time, however, the Word was subject to human limitation and was transcendently divine. The two essences do not exist apart, but they are united in one reality. They are one *properson*, one person, and one actor.

Cyril refuses to speculate on the process whereby this incarnation happens. Rather, he calls it “a mysterious and incomprehensible union without confusion or change,” (77) although he does acknowledge that the kenosis of the Word makes God “capable of bearing the limitations of manhood.” (77) Thus, humanity is not denied or hidden in union with the divine.

It is likely this understanding that led Cyril to a different place than Nestorius. Because Cyril believed God capable of emptying Himself and taking on human form, Cyril was not concerned that being in touch with humanity would corrupt God or render his impassability null. Further, Cyril believed that because the human and divine were qualitatively different, thus denying equality, the transformation was of the human by the divine, and not the other way around. Thus, he could disagree with Nestorius as to the implications of *Theotokos*, since to say that Mary was the Mother-of-God did not imply a qualitative (i.e. ontological) change to either Mary or God.

*The Council of Chalcedon - 451 C.E.*

The formula of Chalcedon is foundationally influenced by Pope Leo and his *Tome to Flavian*, which is to say, by Cyrillian christology. Ordained to the papacy of Rome on September 29, 440 C.E., Leo came to play a vital role in the outcomes of Chalcedon, and thus in the definition of the doctrine of the incarnation. A proponent of the understanding of Christ as one person with two natures and two distinct modes of activity, which he developed from his reading of Cyril, he came into conflict with Nestorius and his theological supporters. His most important theological work on the incarnation, the *Tome to Flavian*, the archbishop of Constantinople from 446-449 C.E., was presented (but not read) at the second Council of Ephesus, leading him to denounce the Council as invalid. Leo put forward his desire for a more Cyrillian and less Eutychian christology,<sup>29</sup> and his *Tome* was incorporated into the formula of Chalcedon.

In the early summer of 450 C.E. it appeared as if the christology of the Eastern empire would take the form of the theology of Dioscorus and Eutyches: Christ was one nature after the incarnation, the Logos took on but did not become human flesh, God's impassability would remain uncompromised. If the humanity of Jesus was overlooked, it was a small price to pay in light of God's divine nature remaining untrammelled by human flesh. However, political events changed the flow of theological history, as there was quick change of imperial leadership which lead to the exile of Eutyches, the circulation of Leo's *Tome* by imperial officials requiring the signatory approval of each eastern bishop, and the calling of the Council at Chalcedon, with an invitation to Leo to preside.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Kate Cooper, "Empress and Theotokos: Gender and Patronage in the Christological Controversy" in *The Church and Mary* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2004) 49.

<sup>30</sup> Price, Volume 2, 10 and Volume 1, 88.

The stated objective of the Council was initially vague, but examining the subjects of the sessions of the Council reveals that there was much at stake for the church itself in terms of which school of theology would guide its theological development. Over the course of the Council, Pope Leo's *Tome to Flavian*, in which he argued that Christ is one person with two natures (i.e. two distinct modes of activity) existing primarily as the Logos, was read and elevated to the status of orthodox writing, and a new Definition of faith concerning the Incarnation was put forward. The final version began with two repetitions of the Nicene Creed, emphasizing that the Council was not inventing a new definition of faith per se, but simply a new interpretation.<sup>31</sup> It included the phrase "Mary the *Theotokos*" as advocated by Cyril, and adopted the *Tome's* language of divinity and humanity in Christ "without confusion, change, division, or separation."<sup>32</sup> Despite the signatures of all present affirming the new Definition, it must be acknowledged that they were gathered under imperial-exercised duress.<sup>33</sup> While the Council was technically unanimously approved,<sup>34</sup> the internal tension proved problematic centuries later.

*Maximus the Confessor - Constantinople - 580-662 C.E.*

Maximus' theology of the incarnation demonstrates distinct differences (not to be confused with new ideas) from those Church fathers who lived prior to Chalcedon, one hundred and thirty years before Maximus' birth. The gap of almost a century did not lessen the tension or

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<sup>31</sup> Price, Volume 1, 202. V.32-33.

<sup>32</sup> Price, Volume 1, 204 V.34. f.n.53

<sup>33</sup> After the Roman church officials demanded the inclusion of Leo's *Tome*, the remainder of the Council objected to what they saw as a move to produce a new statement of orthodoxy. The "most glorious officials," (the imperial representatives) decided to take the matter to the emperor. The imperial reply was clear: the Council was to produce a Definition "so as to please everyone" or face relocation of the Council to Rome. In other words, give in to Rome on this issue or face having the entire definition decided in Rome, with Leo at the helm. Price, volume 1, 199. 18-22.

<sup>34</sup> Except for one clergy, Eustathius of Berytus, who claimed later that he had "signed this under pressure, not being in agreement." Price, vol. 2, 220. f.n.28

division that arose from the Council's actions. The aforementioned internal tension paved the way for a split that by Maximus' time had erupted in a controversy between monothelitism (two natures with only one (divine) will) and dyothelitism (two wills with a "differentiated unity"), with Maximus siding with the latter.<sup>35</sup> By the sixth century, the accepted interpretation of Chalcedon emphasized that the Incarnate Christ is "one of three Persons of the Trinity,"<sup>36</sup> where the word *person* indicated a "mode of existence" and not a state of being. Maximus thus developed his Christology as an argument against the one will theology of the Monophysites, following the lead of Chalcedon's "without confusion, change, division or separation." At issue for him was the humanity (by which he meant will) of Christ, with his concern that monothelitism, with its assertion of only one divine will, was dispensing with the humanity of Christ altogether.

Like Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Cyril before him, Maximus' understanding of incarnation can be tied to his soteriology. However, unlike them, his understanding emerges from the Greek concept of deification, particularly as understood by Dionysius the Areopagite.<sup>37</sup> Deification was a means of becoming divine, which was accomplished through Christ who took on human form and united it with divinity, in order to pave the way for humans to do likewise. Important here is the focus on the incarnation as a means of union that did not rely on death and resurrection for humans to participate. Maximus' focus is not death, and the resurrection is not the pivotal moment for the incarnated Christ.

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<sup>35</sup> Melchisedec Törönen, "Union and Distinction in the Thought of St. Maximus the Confessor" (*Journal of Theological Studies*, 59 no 1, 2008) 384-386.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew Louth, editor and translator, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), 49-50.

<sup>37</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)* The Christian Tradition Volume 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) 11.

Maximus' emphasis on dyothelitism arose out of his theological anthropology, in which he argued for a natural relationship between God and humankind, based on the natural goodness humans have as the Creation of God. To be human entails several things. First, it means having a soul, which has a rational mind that links it with God, as well as senses that link it with body and matter: "The soul is a middle being between God and matter and has powers that can unite it with both, that is, it has a mind that links it with God and senses that link it with matter. ... [The] soul can be ineffably assimilated to God by means of the mind alone." (10, 1193A)<sup>38</sup> Second, it means that when we will what is good, this is considered to be natural willing, since we are by nature created to be good. However, in the fall, which was about the misuse of nature rather than distortion, we came to will to do bad, which Maximus calls *gnomic willing*.<sup>39</sup>

The purpose of Christ then, is to enable humans to overcome their gnomic will. When Maximus says that Christ has two wills, he is arguing that Christ has a divine will and a human will, but not a gnomic will.<sup>40</sup> Instead, Christ's human will, which is not gnomic because humans are naturally good, submits itself to the divine will, thus making Christ a "type and symbol" for humankind, pointing creation to Himself as the way in which the soul can move towards God. When this occurs, "God and man are paradigms one of another, that as much as God is humanized to man through love for mankind, so much man is able to be deified to God through love."<sup>41</sup> (10, 1113B)

Christ is able to become human because the *logos* (i.e. principle) of human nature is not

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<sup>38</sup> Louth. Citations refer to Difficulty and fragment marker.

<sup>39</sup> Louth, 62, 58.

<sup>40</sup> Louth, 61

<sup>41</sup> Louth explains that this emphasis on deification comes of the ascetic tradition, in which Christians come to know God through experience, rather than speculation, and come to know God the same way Christ did, by kenosis. Louth, 33.



fundamentally or ontologically corrupt (which would contradict the good God who created Creation to be good), thus posing no barrier for being assumed by Christ. The human nature does not need to change to be united with the divine, and so Christ is considered to be fully human. This understanding of humanity as naturally and ontologically good stands in contrast to [earlier theologians,] who saw human nature as corrupting and capable of compromising God's impassibility in the incarnation. Maximus does not find himself in the same place of tension as the earlier theologians did, because his anthropology poses no risk for God's impassibility, and is therefore able to spend more time emphasizing the positive consequences of Christ being human. (Maximus spends more time emphasizing the humanity of Christ, as this is what he felt to be more threatened. However, he did emphasize the divinity of Christ, stating that he is pre-existing and without mother, that his divine form is "universally inaccessible and incomprehensible," and that "he is by nature God." Christ as divine is the universal unity of logos - logoi - through wisdom.)

To argue that Christ has two wills, Maximus comes up with a new definition of "theandric energy." (5, 1056B) Using this term, Maximus writes about the two energies/natures/will of Christ, the *the-* (divine) and the *-and* (human), in which the human submits to the divine but still directs the actual flesh of Jesus, as "double [but not a new or doubled] in nature." (5, 1057C) This energy is not a middle road, and doesn't erase the differences between the divine and human energies, nor it is a "borderland between two extremes." (5, 1056D) For Maximus, there is no conflict between difference and unity. The "affirmation of union" does not negate difference, nor does difference cause division.

Maximus' concept of the unity of the two wills in Christ affirms the hypostatic union of

Cyril and Chalcedon. Thus he states that “the [human] nature, united without confusion to [divine] nature, is completely interpenetrated, and in no way annulled or separated from the Godhead hypostatically united to it.” (5, 1053B) Likewise, (at the risk of being repetitive), he writes that “the Godhead and the the humanity are united hypostatically but neither of the natural energies is displaced by the union, nor are they unrelated to each other after the union, but they are distinguished in their conjuncture and embrace.” (5, 1060A-B)<sup>42</sup> By the use of hypostatic, Maximus is emphasizing that this unity occurs in the corporeal, physical reality in which all humans live. Thus Christ walks around, works miracles, eats, and heals people as one person (that is, one existence) with two wills. Maximus, explaining how it was possible for the human Christ to walk on water, explained that “the natural energy of his own flesh is inseparable from the power of his divinity.” (5, 1949C)

This union exists into the resurrection, leading me to question whether Maximus is exceeding the Chalcedonian (or Nicean) definition of the *hypostatic* union.. Maximus asserts that “with [Christ’s] earthly body that is of the same nature and consubstantiation with ours he entered into heaven. ... Then, in addition to this, by passing with his soul and body, ... through all the divine and intelligible ranks of heaven, he united the sensible and the intelligible.” (41, 1309C) For Maximus, the divine and the human are so united that they do not separate even after death, and Christ’s body thus descended to “hell” and is not floating around in heaven.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> In this passage and just prior to this quote, Maximus uses imagery of a sword in the fire to explain the exchange/retainment of properties just as Origen did, (II, VI, 6) presumably since Origen influenced Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus’ predecessors in the Cappadocian tradition.

<sup>43</sup> Relating to Exam #3 (Paper), Louth’s description of Maximus’ concept of unity is provocative. Louth describes the human person as a “kind of central crossing-place,” where “the Incarnation reveals the mutually-encountering crossings-over – of God to humankind and of humankind to God.”<sup>44</sup> The potential for this imagery of crossing-place, along with Maximus’ understanding of the relationship between universality and particularity (which was not discussed in this essay) might be used to envision a relational model for multiple contextual Christologies. Louth, 70-72.

## ***Medieval - Question 1***

### *Introduction*

“The Middle Ages may be seen as the period when the primary focus of Christian thought about Christ shifted from what he was to what he did, from the person of Christ to the work of Christ.”<sup>44</sup> The rise of the scholastic method and its impact on theologies of the Incarnation was first begun by Anselm, who was eager to prove theological answers on the basis of reason rather than the revelation given in Scripture - the famous “faith seeking understanding.” Yet Peter of Lombard (1100-1160 C.E.) and Thomas of Aquinas (1225-1274 C.E.) demonstrate the peak of scholasticism, even as they differed in their approaches to the philosophical underpinnings of theology. Peter was influenced by Plato, but Thomas, although also influenced by Platonic thought, had also been exposed to Aristotle. Because Plato and Aristotle took two differing views on epistemology, the first believing that knowledge came through reasoning and the second adding experience, they contributed to two different views on anthropology. The Platonic view, that the mind is superior to the body, came into conflict with the Aristotelian view, that the body is a source of knowledge through its sense, and is equally valid (if not more reliable) than the mind for gathering data. These two different views of the relationship of the mind/body and the world manifested in theological understandings of anthropology, which in turn came to influence doctrines of the Incarnation, insofar as Christ was understood to be human, and how that humanity was united to divinity without compromising the latter. As Thomas himself wrote a commentary on Peter’s *Sentences*, a little-remarked upon fact, this essay will explore the ways in which Aquinas relied on Lombard’s developments, also taking note of where they differentiated.

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<sup>44</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)*, The Christian Tradition Volume 3, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978) 3.

To understand the significance of the union of divine and human natures, Peter explores a number of options regarding what it means to say that God “was made” man or that God “is” man, since both imply an ontological change in God (as it were), that God became something God was previously not. (VI, 1, 1) <sup>45</sup> Since God is considered immutable, the idea that God might change in this process is clearly problematic. For Aquinas, the process by which the two natures come together is through assumption. [II, 3, 8]<sup>46</sup> Assumption is not to be confused with union, however. Union implies equal relation of each party to the other, as well as a completeness to the union taking place. Assumption, on the contrary, similar to Peter, is an action of becoming, that occurs from one to another but not vice versa. Therefore, it is appropriate to say the Divine Nature *assumed* the human, but wrong to say the human nature assumed the divine, since they are not equal. Aquinas is not thereby denying union altogether; the divine nature is united to the human, is united to the divine, but as far as with whom the agency of the relationship lies, it is clear that Aquinas is emphasizing the divine.

The first option Peter considers is the proposal that in uniting the flesh and soul with the Word, God began to be something new. In this interpretation, Peter considers it appropriate to begin with Augustine’s lead and say that the Son of God is man and that *that* man was God. However, Peter emphasizes that 1) it was *that particular man* (i.e., Christ Jesus of Nazareth), not all men in general, and that 2) it happened purely by the grace of God, and “not by merits or nature.” The man did not earn the privilege of being God, nor is it something that comes naturally to humans. (VI, 2, 9) Nevertheless, Augustine notwithstanding (and according to Peter

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<sup>45</sup> Peter Lombard, *The Sentences, Book 3: On the Incarnation of the Word*, translated by Guilio Silano (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2008). Citation refers to Book, Distinction, paragraph.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. (Coyote Canyon Press) Kindle edition ASIN Boo3T9V9A4. Citation refers to Chapter, Question, Response.

subject to misinterpretation), Peter considers this option to argue that God was made into something, which means God changed. Since God does not change, it is incorrect to say that God was made into something new. (VII, 1, 2) Thomas agrees with Peter's description that this option is heretical. It "maintains two persons," (III, 2, 6) as Peter concludes.

The second option Peter presents responds to the question of whether the divine changes by way of exploring what constitutes the Son of God. Thus Lombard explores the proposal that Christ is made of three *substances*: divine nature, and human nature, which includes flesh and soul. (VI, 3, 1) This composition of two natures and three substances exists in one person, who always existed, and so was not made. Rather, the divine person was made *into* a man, through a composite of two substances with the third, but the divine person was not made in the beginning. The critique that Lombard levels here is that Christ is not a composite, but *subsists* in two natures. This use of subsistence by Peter is more in line with his use of hypostasis, as a way of existing in the world that is more about concrete presence than about ontological change. (VII, 1, 5) Interestingly, Thomas here disagrees with the Master. Thomas is most in agreement with this option, arguing for its orthodoxy because the Council of Constantinople "confesses a union of the Word of God with flesh, by composition, which is in the subsistence." (III, 2, 6) Thomas' argument, however, is based on a particular understanding of this union as it relates to the one person, which I will now address before moving to Peter's third option.

To understand Thomas' use of the word "person," and its function as the site of the union, it is first important to understand his use of the word *suppositum*. A *suppositum* is a "thing," for lack of a better word, that exists in this world. For humans, a *suppositum* is the "thing" of an individual that contains its rational nature. (Animals also have a *suppositum* but it does not have

a rational nature, that being a uniquely human attribute.) The *suppositum* cannot be separated from the rational nature, because a human can neither exist solely as nature (i.e., rationality), nor as simply the *suppositum* (i.e., as an animal). This *suppositum* is considered to be the person insofar as it includes nature. For the Word, the *suppositum* is the place where the unity of two natures takes place, since nature requires a place to “be.” Thomas also argues that to use the term one hypostasis is the same as saying one person. The hypostasis is the concrete instantiation of the person. Thus, Thomas argues that one person/hypostasis/*suppositum* is where the two natures come together. (III, 2, 3) However, lest there be any confusion, he clarifies that when the Divine Nature assumed the human, the assumption was not of a human person, but of the uncreated *suppositum* (including the nature) of the Person of the Son of God. (III, 4, 2) The key to this statement is that the *suppositum* is uncreated, and the person is that of the Son of God, not of a human person. This bringing together of two natures in one *suppositum* allows Thomas to argue in favor of Peter’s section option of understanding the taking on of human nature by the divine as “composite.”

The third option Peter presents is Augustine’s example of the Son of God taking on “the habit of a man,” in that God took on human form as clothing, thus shaping the human flesh without actually changing God. Just as we take on clothes but do not change into the clothes, God took on human form, changing the shape of the form to fit the divine person, without changing into a human person. (VI, 6, 3-4) Again, Peter does not give any explicit indication of his choice among the three options to the question of whether it is correct to say that God “was made” or “is” man. He concludes that he has no final, definitive answer to the question, but whatever the answer, one must hold to Gennadius’ words that the process happened “by God’s

condescension,” bearing in mind that “a transformation or changeableness makes for a diminution of nature and the abolition of substance.” (VII, 3, 3) Thus, one is led to conclude that he implicitly favored the third option. And while Thomas wants to reject the third option because it denies any true union, he attempts to redeem Peter’s choice by reinterpreting the original quote from Augustine to say that the putting on of the human form is actually a true unity, and not accidental, so that Peter is not seen to uphold a heretical belief. However, it could be argued that this is a “creative reinterpretation” of Augustine, and that Peter is skirting the edges of Chalcedonian Christology.

Understanding Peter’s position on unity and distinction between the two natures can be more clearly understood by a focused look at his theology. Peter locates the issue of the unity and distinction of the natures within the issue of what it means to say that Christ is a person. That is, he makes it a point to distinguish between Christ as a man, and Christ as the Word of God, the divine person. First, he argues that it is a flaw of logic to argue that because Christ has a soul (by which he means rational intellect), he is thus a person. The soul does not make one a person since it lacks flesh, thus it is impossible to claim Christ’s personhood without also acknowledging Christ’s flesh. (X, 1, 1) Yet it is not the flesh that imputes personhood, either. Peter has established that the divine pre-existence of the Word in the Trinity bestows personhood, but it is also nevertheless correct to say that *as man*, Christ had a beginning and was made (i.e., created). (XI, 1, 1 and II, 1, 1) Peter takes this distinction further when he proposes that any progress or change displayed by Christ (i.e. either in physical growth or wisdom) was entirely “according to his human nature” and not according to his divine nature, since the latter was fully given at the moment of his conception. (XIII, 1, 5) Thus it was possible for the flesh of Christ to

mature from infant to adult without compromising the impassibility of the divine nature.

This unity has two implications for Peter. Quoting John of Damascus, Peter contends that the Word is both embodied and transcendent, constrained by its physical boundaries and simultaneously infinite without boundaries at all. Nevertheless, the divine nature does not cause the flesh lose its boundaries (which would render it incorporeal): “The Word was made flesh and did not abandon its own corporeality, – and it was entirely made flesh, and it was entirely uncircumscribed. In respect to its body, it is made less and contracts; in respect to its divinity, it is uncircumscribed, the flesh not being coextensive with the uncircumscribed divinity.” (III, 5, 1) Humanity is established without corrupting the impassibility of the divine. For Thomas, the respect for corporeality takes the shape of his incorporation of several life-events of Christ, such as birth, circumcision, baptism by John, Passion, and entombment that Peter did not address. (III, 37-42) For Thomas, these moments are vital for demonstrating not only the human nature and body of Christ, but also the unity of human and divine in the one person.<sup>47</sup>

To further understand how the human and divine came together without compromising the divine, it is helpful to examine the understanding of the wills in these two theologians, particularly the relationship between the divine and the human wills. Here we find agreement among the two. With two natures, how many wills did Christ have? Lombard here engages in that unique metaphysical math whereby two natures leads to three wills. In addition to the divine will, Christ had a human will of reason and one of sensuality, the first having charge over the second. Thus, the sensual will would have resisted anticipated suffering, but the will of reason

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<sup>47</sup> One example, in particular, will be highlighted here. Aquinas argues that it was appropriate and obligatory for Christ to be circumcised on the eighth day as a descendent of Abraham because the new covenant was not inaugurated until Christ’s Passion. However, this does not mean that Christians should be physically circumcised, as they undergo a circumcision of the heart, as Paul advocated. (III, 37, 1)



would have overridden it, and conformed to the divine will, which dictated that suffering was part of the Passion. (XVII, 1, 1-3) In addition to two natures, Thomas also attests to the presence of two wills, since the will is part of the nature. (III, 18, 1) However, the two wills do not come into conflict with one another, since Christ's rational will willed to do what God's will willed. Although his sensual will did not, accounting for Christ's prayer in Gethsemane that the cup be passed from him, his rational will was in charge. Thomas clearly echoes Peter's understanding that the human sensual will is ruled by the human rational will, which in turn submits to the divine will.

Finally, a comparison between Peter's and Thomas' treatment of the unity of Christ after death will help in understanding how they understood humanity to exist in Christ with compromising the divine. In asking what happened to the soul and the flesh when Christ died, Peter proposes that "the Godhead severed itself because it took away its protection, but did not dissolve the union; it separated itself outwardly so that it was not there to defend him, but was not absent inwardly in regard to the union. (XXI, 1, 4) Here, Peter wants to assert that Christ's flesh did indeed die, by which he means Christ died, and that this was a result of the flesh "laying down" the soul. Upon this severance, the flesh was separated from the soul, but the Word of God was still in union with the flesh, and still in union with the soul, thus there continued to be a unity of human and divine natures. (XX, 1, 7-8) "According to the one nature," Christ suffered, crucified, and was died, "and according to the other nature, he was unable to suffer" or die. (XX, 2, 5) Finally, lest there be confusion in explaining what it means that Christ died as man, Peter contends that, in death, Christ was *a man who was dead*, thereby denying neither his manhood nor his death, while simultaneously asserting his divine nature. (XXII, 1, 1)

Thomas draws different conclusions. Given that Christ “died as man, and not as God,” (III, 50, 1) Thomas addresses the question: “What belongs to the body of Christ after death is predicated of the Son of God?” (III, 50, 2) His response is that the “Godhead was not separated from the flesh when he died,” since death in the case of Christ was not the result of sin. Thomas bases his answer on his understanding that upon death, the separation of the body and soul, and the resulting decay of the body, are the consequences of sin, but since Christ is without sin, his body did not decay during the three days following his death. (III, 50, 2) Thomas concludes this section by contending that Christ rose with his body, particularly including his scars, thus paving the way for bodily resurrection for the rest of Adam’s race, as well.

While both Peter and Thomas are interested in maintaining a relationship between the divine and the human, and while both are keen to emphasize that such a relationship did not in anyway corrupt the divine, Peter accomplishes this with an emphasis on separation, while Thomas finds union to be less problematic than Peter.

***Medieval - Question 2***

This essay will discuss Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas of Aquinas in terms of their theology of incarnation, noting their relations to the Council of Chalcedon. Because Thomas was addressed in the previous essay, the presentation of Anselm will constitute the bulk of this essay.

*Anselm of Canterbury - 1033-1109 C.E.*

Anselm's theology of the incarnation is, unsurprisingly by now, intricately connected to his soteriology. Because Anselm understands Christ's incarnation to be necessitated by his soteriological function, it is first necessary to understand what that function is before understanding how the incarnation occurs. Thus, his opening question in *Cur Deus Homo* is: "For what reason and on the basis of what necessity did God become a man?" (*Cur* I, 1)<sup>48</sup>

At the basis of Anselm's Christology is the soteriological understanding of payment for damages, with additional payments for what we would call "emotional distress," but which Anselm calls "dishonor." (Pelikan notes that this idea of satisfaction probably comes from the church penitential system, and I would add that the language itself presumably arises from developments in the liturgy.<sup>49</sup>)

Anselm's soteriology runs thus: Man (sic) has sinned by not doing what God wills. This sin, in addition to being disobedience, dishonors God. Therefore, man must make recompense for the sin and for the dishonor. (If man does not, "God's plan for man should be completely thwarted." (*Cur*, I, 4.)) In order to recompense God for the sin, the payment must be bigger than

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<sup>48</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo*, edited and translated by Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Toronto and New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1976). Citation refers to Book, Chapter.

<sup>49</sup> Pelikan, vol. 3., 143.

the honor of God. Therefore, man must give to God something bigger than God. Which, of course, man cannot do, having received everything he has to give from God in the first place. (*Cur*, I, 20) Thus, somebody who has more than man must give back to God. Man should, but can't. (Anselm's literary counterpart Boso asks, can't God just be merciful and forgive? Anselm argues that no, God must be just, first, and that to be just (and presumably reliable and trustworthy) God must stick to God's own rules.)

Since man cannot render satisfaction, God must, and thereupon enters Christ. (*Cur*, I, 25) And here is where Anselm moves into discussion of the incarnation, although as Pelikan notes, he does not do it by centering on Christ as Jesus of Nazareth per se, but simply by referring to the God-man and what such a person entails.

Anselm is primarily interested in the why of the incarnation rather than how, and so he argues why the God-man needs to be God, rather than how. To that end, he begins by arguing that whoever frees man from their due will be their master, and since humans can only have one master, that master should be divine. (*Cur*, I, 5) The next argument that Anselm puts forward for the necessity of the God-man being divine is that human nature could never possibly will to die, and so the God-man could never be only man. Nevertheless, death is required as part of the compensation package that humans must offer to God, and so the divine nature must help with that. That Christ willed to die proves that he had divine will (by which Anselm means God's will) and therefore he was also divine.

It is important also to emphasize that Anselm believed that the *person* of the incarnation was divine: "The assumption of a human nature into the unity of a divine person will be done wisely by Supreme Wisdom." (*Cur*, II, 12) (Dániel Deme observes that it is a divine person (i.e.,

the Word) with two natures, not a human person with two natures, because otherwise the divine nature would be separated from God by the human person.<sup>50</sup>)

Since man is the one who is obligated to recompense God, the God-man must also be man. This man must be authentically human, “from within ‘Adam’s race’” but without sin, born of a virgin. (*Cur*, II, 8.) God thus assumes human nature. This human substance, which includes the body, is naturally weak and low, but does not transmit this vulnerability or passibility to the divine nature. Rather, the human nature is exalted in being assumed by the divine person. Further, the human nature has a will of its own, but submits to the divine will. (Deme argues that this takes the form of the “absorption of the human will by the divine,” but does not explain what “absorption” means. Since Anselm argues that humans are given the freedom to sin so that they could choose to do good, one wonders what the absorption of this human freedom by the divine will implies about freedom as intrinsic to human nature.) Interestingly, Anselm believes that death is not part of human nature, but a result of human’s corruption. Thus, death pertains only to Christ’s human nature, while he retains the incorruptibility of his divine nature. (*Cur* II, 11)

In attesting to bodily resurrection, Anselm makes a statement that displays his anthropology: "The whole man (i.e. consisting in a soul and a body)..." (*Cur*, II, 3) He also makes parallels later that the divine and the human are as the soul and the body, by which he means to elevate the divine as the soul is elevated over the body: the "two integral natures conjoin in one person (just as a body and a rational soul conjoin in one man.)" (*Cur*, II, 7)

It is important, however, not to confuse the nature of the man Jesus with the nature of man in general, as Pelikan reminds us.<sup>51</sup> The nature of the man Jesus is without sin, being born

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<sup>50</sup> Dániel Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 151.

<sup>51</sup> Pelikan, vol. 3., 142.

from a virgin, and is referred to most accurately as the man-as-assumed-by-the-Word.<sup>52</sup> (*DIV*, 11) Indeed, Anselm expends a great deal of ink differentiating between man and the assumed-man, in order not to compromise the word, so that he might adhere to the Chalcedonian definition of unity “without confusion.” The divinely-assumed man Jesus is different from all other men in that he constitutes “a collection of distinguishing properties which is the same for the Word and the assumed man.” (*DIV*, 11)<sup>53</sup>

Anselm holds to the by-now orthodox faith that Christ is two natures in one person, one divine nature and one human nature. He also holds to the idea that there is only a one-way transformation of the divine affecting the human, rather than the other way around. Like the early Church fathers, he believes that there is essentially a one-way path from divine to human, but not the other. The human weakness does not corrupt the divine, thus protecting God's impassibility. Further, he argues that the two natures function differently (which is very different from the interpretation of Maximus the Confessor) and implies throughout that the divine nature makes decisions over the human nature. “In Christ, the diversity of natures and the unity of a person serve the following end: If the human nature was not able to do what was required to be done for restoring men, then the divine nature would do it; and if [what was required] did not at all befit the divine nature, then the human nature would do it.” (*Cur*, II, 17) (Presumably, Anselm means to say that things like drinking, eating, sleeping, etc. do not befit divine nature.)

Anselm highlights the problems of the two extremes. When there is not enough separation, the (heretical) argument develops that the human nature becomes divine or vice

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<sup>52</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *De Incarnatione Verbi* (Toronto and New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1976). Citation refers to section heading.

<sup>53</sup> One wonders what Anselm would make of Laurel C. Schneider's *Multiplicity* or she of him.

versa. Another argument when there is not enough separation between the two is the heretical proposal that the two engage in "corrupt mingling" that forms "a third nature which is neither fully divine or fully human." (*Cur*, II, 7) This is NOT what Anselm understands to take place in the incarnation. He adheres to a unity without confusion, per the Chalcedonian dicatates.

The other extreme is that of too much separation. Here, Anselm argues that when heresies make the human divided from (rather than distinct from) the divine, it comes to be the case that the one who is divine "is not identical with the one who is human," leading to two persons, and thus salvation becomes impossible because the divine nature will not make satisfaction and the human nature cannot. (*Cur*, II, 7)

In order to avoid both of those extremes, Anselm argues that the fully divine and fully human must be "one and the same individual." (*Cur*, II, 7.) Ye he also says that the divine person "will not assume into its human nature that which is not at all useful (but is, in fact, very harmful.)" (*Cur*, II, 12). This distinction leads one to conjecture on the basis of this sentence alone that Anselm views human nature as primarily good, and that the sin that comes into humans is something added on after their creation, and clearly can be removed.

Anselm appears to emphasize the latter half of the God-man relationship more than the former. Although he argues that God and (the assumed) man are the same person, that does not mean that the assumed man (i.e. Jesus) is the Father or the Spirit. We also cannot say that the assumed man Jesus is God. It is possible to say that Jesus is the same person as the one who is Word and Son, who is God, but the identity does not fully extend from the assumed man to God. Thus, to say Jesus is God is not correct, although to say Jesus Christ, Son of Man and Son of God would be.

Anselm's soteriology is most simply described as: Only God can, but only Man should. His understanding of the incarnation is thus equally simply described: the God-Man. More complexly, he argues in *De Incarnatione Verbi*, that "God assumed a human nature not in such a way that the divine nature and the human nature were one and the same but in such a way that the person of God and the person of man were one and the same." (*DIV*, 9) Although Anselm is here making the point that the Father and the Holy Spirit are not incarnated with the Son, his argument both highlights the two natures in the incarnation, and also that there is only one person.

That being said, his differentiation between Christ as man and Christ as assumed-man, favoring the latter, leads one to question his commitment to the full humanity of Christ, as Chalcedon proposes. If there are such differences between Christ and man-in-general, is Christ really human, or is he a kind of pseudo-human? And if Christ is a kind of pseudo-human (which is supported in the ways that Anselm argues that certain parts of the human nature will not be assumed into Christ (i.e. the unuseful, harmful parts)), then Christ cannot really be said to render satisfaction for humans, if he doesn't truly resemble humanity any longer. Anselm can thus be interpreted in such a way that his emphasis on the one person is really an emphasis on the one person *as divine*, and not on the two natures that make up the one person. To this extent, his Christology might not be understood as properly Chalcedonian.

### *Thomas of Aquinas*

As Thomas' theology was addressed in comparison with Peter's this brief exposition will not repeat that material, but only add to what is presented earlier.



Thomas' doctrine of the Incarnation is purely orthodox: two natures united in one person. Such a short statement, however, is misleading regarding its simplicity. In order for him to rationally defend this statement, he must deal with at least five components parts: the two natures (one human and one divine), their unity, (their distinction), and the one person.

Following Chalcedon, Thomas argues that the two natures are whole, in and of themselves. (III, 2, 4) The human nature of Christ, like all human natures, is made up of a soul and a body. Because Christ is fully human, he has a human soul to go along with his human body. (III, 2, 5) This is because "the soul is the principle of the life of the body, as its form." (III, 4, 3) Without the soul, there is no body. Further, Thomas argues that Christ also assumes the mind, as the mind is what makes the human soul actually human. Thus, to be truly human, Christ must have soul, intellect/reason, and a body. Here, Thomas appears to take issue with the neo-Platonic argument that the intellect of the human is separate from (and superior) to the flesh. (This is perhaps the reason Pelikan describes his work as a "criticism of Augustine," in which Thomas attempts to refute the Platonism of Augustine while maintaining Augustine's orthodox doctrine.<sup>54</sup>) Instead, he posits that there is no human without materiality. But what does it mean exactly for Christ to have a soul? First, this is further evidence that Christ was fully human, as the soul constitutes human status. The consequence is that, as human, Christ's soul was passible and suffered. (III, 15, 4) Thomas is not arguing that God suffered, but that the Son of God as the assumed-man suffered. This is possible because the Divine Nature assumed the human nature, including the *suppositum*, which itself suffered. Thus it can be said that the Divine Nature suffered, or more accurately, that the assumed *suppositum* of the Divine Nature suffered. This

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<sup>54</sup> Pelikan, vol. 3., 271.

does not compromise the impassible Divine because it is not a claim that the un-assumed Divine Nature suffered (which would be impossible without a body anyway). (III, 46, 2)

How does Thomas make this move? He relies on the principle of analogy, and contends that one can attribute human characteristics to the assumed-man, the Word of God. This does not mean that attributes apply directly to God, who as God himself did not assume human nature. Nor can the attribute of the human nature be predicated of the divine nature, because they are two natures, not one. Nevertheless, what humans experience can be said to apply to the Word of God, and thus it can be said that the Word of God thirsted, hungered, and suffered.

Thomas locates of the unity of the two natures in the one person, which was discussed in the previous essay. When confronted with the claim that Cyril and Athanasius both argued that the Word had one nature, rather than two, Thomas responds that past definitions of “nature” referred to different things, and that the Alexandrians’ words were being misinterpreted. (III, 2, 1) The divine nature and the human nature are each their own separate thing, the divine nature being without materiality and the human nature having its own properties.

Thomas then moves beyond the early Church fathers by bringing nuance to the discussion of the union of two natures and what it entails. He is clear to say that neither nature *changes* into the other. The divine nature does not become human, nor does the human nature become God: “the Divine nature is said to be incarnate because It is united to flesh personally, and *not that It is changed into flesh*. So likewise the flesh is said to be deified, as [Damascene] also says, *not by change but by union* with the Word, its natural properties still remaining.” (III, 2, 1, emphasis added) The human nature is glorified because it is brought into union with the divine nature of the Word of God, not because it undergoes some essential change. However, lest

some people interpret Thomas as saying that there is no effect from the union of the two natures, Thomas argues that the human nature is deified *insofar as it “becomes” the body of the Word*, but it cannot be said to “become” God. (In explaining how Christ worked miracles, whether by divine or human power, Thomas follows the lead of Pope Leo’s *Tome to Flavian* and engages in a kind of functionalist division, whereby miracles took place by the power of the divine nature, which communicated this power so that the human nature could act.)

As stated earlier, Thomas’ doctrine of the Incarnation brings together the two natures in the one person in a way that conforms to the Chalcedonian definition. His emphasis on both the soul and the materiality of the human nature is a welcome development from the Early Church writings, as is his emphasis on the corporeality of the risen Christ. Finally, his emphasis on assumption rather than union, as reviewed in the previous essay, allows Thomas to argue in favor of an intimate relationship without demanding the transformation of one nature into the other, a key proponent of Chalcedon Christology.

### ***The Reformation - Questions 1 and 2***

*(Please note - as questions 1 and 2 are very much interrelated, this essay answer will incorporate both questions rather than engage in repetition. It is my hope that this format will enable a clearer presentation of the answers to the two questions than two separate answers, particularly as the Reformers' later critique of Luther and later Lutherans' critique of Calvin were based on their approaches to the *communicatio idiomatum*.)*

*Martin Luther - Germany - 1483-1546 C.E.*

In Luther's *Disputation on the Divinity and the Humanity of Christ* (1540),<sup>55</sup> Luther holds to the Chalcedonian definition of two natures in one person. However, his interpretation leads to several key points regarding how these two natures interact, resulting in him being misinterpreted by the Reformers as denying the separation of the two distinct natures, and thus falling outside the bounds of orthodoxy. This portion of the essay will argue the contrary however, that Luther's emphasis on unity through the *communicatio idiomatum* actually protects the distinctness of the two natures, rather than overriding them, thus disproving the Reformers' argument.

To be fair to the Reformers, Luther heavily emphasizes the unity of the two natures, to such a degree that he would appear to obliterate the distinct divine nature. He argues against Schwenkfeld that Christ is a creature, and states that there is an "undivided union." He argues that the person Christ created the world, and that saying that "the man Christ" created the world is not incorrect. Further, he argues that "such a strict unity exists that it is impossible to say different things [of the divinity and the humanity]. Therefore whatever I say of Christ as man, I also say rightly of God, that he suffered, was crucified." (Arg. 2) He follows that by saying that "what the man cries, God also cries out, and ... because of the unity of the person, this being

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<sup>55</sup> Martin Luther, *On the Disputation of the Divinity and Humanity of Christ*. Translated by Christopher B. Brown (Project Wittenberg, 2010. <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther:luther.divinity.txt>.) Exported to Kindle, April 24, 2011.

crucified is attributed to the divinity as well." (Arg. 5) If one were to read only these quotes, one might certainly be led to believe that he advocated a unity without distinction, in contradiction of Chalcedon.

Further examination demonstrates, however, that Luther successfully defends his argument as orthodox through two avenues. One is to simply insist on the mystery of the Incarnation. In Argument 6, Luther is perfectly happy to concede that certain human attributes predicated of God are philosophically incomprehensible, or even contradictory, but he also contends that theology is a different area, one where things are often "incomprehensible" and Christ utters what appears to be contradictions. Thus we can believe that "the Son is born eternal from eternity" and also that Christ was born like all creatures and is thus "not from eternity." In theology, Luther is led by the words of Christ and the revelation of the Holy Spirit to believe what is contradictory. Additionally, he attests, in his typically succinct way, that "we believe these things are incomprehensible; if they could be comprehended, there would be no need to believe them." Pelikan's observation that Luther ridiculed the scholastics for investigating the relation between the two natures of Christ as "sophistic" seems apt. (Pelikan, Vol. 4, 359)

The second avenue Luther follows is that of the *communicatio idiomatum*. The unity of two natures is so close and indivisible that "there is a communication of attributes, so that what is attributed to one nature is attributed to the other as well, because they are one person." Therefore, "what is done by the human nature is said also to be done by the divine nature, and vice versa. Thus the Son of God died and was buried in the dust like everyone else, and the son of Mary ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, etc." (Introduction) This communication occurs within the one person of Christ, by way of his unity. Luther insists that

the unity of the person of Christ is a reality that cannot be denied, and is concretely displayed in Christ's existence on earth. In this unity of person, the two natures come together and interact. As one nature experiences something, it is communicated to the person of Christ. Christ being one person with two natures, it is thereby automatically communicated to the other nature, which exists within the one person. To deny the communication of attributes is thus to deny the one person of Christ.

In such a communication, human predicates of Christ are changed by the divine nature so that they apply specifically and uniquely to Christ. Thus, when applying the word "creature" to a regular person, it "signifies a thing separated from divinity by infinite degrees." (Thesis 20) A creature is thus something that is qualitatively different from the divine. When applying that word to Christ, the presence of the divine nature means that the word "signifies a thing inseparably joined with divinity in the same person in an ineffable way." (Thesis 21) The unity of the two natures in Christ enables a communication of the divine transformation of the human attribute such that it means something new in Christ. Thus it becomes possible to describe Christ, and God as Christ, using human comparisons without compromising the divine nature.

This move is possible because Luther never describes the humanity or creatureliness of Christ without also immediately referring to his divine nature: "The human nature is not to be spoken of apart from the divinity. The humanity is not a person, but a nature." (Arg. 9) When Luther describes a human attribute of Christ, he follows that promptly with a divine attribute, following the words of Christ in John 14, who responds to Philip that "He who sees me, sees the Father." (Ibid.)

Further, Luther is clear to differentiate between communication of the attributes in a

*general* way and communication in a *specific* way. Thus, it is not possible to say that a generalized attribute of man [sic] (i.e. that he feels fear), is also true of God. It is possible, and necessary, that the specific attribute of the man Jesus (i.e. that he felt fear in the garden of Gethsemane), is true of God as it is true *of the divine nature*. This is due in part to the way Luther understands the use of language and analogy, and his argument for specificity of use when speaking of Christ the man, but it is also due to his emphasis on the intended meaning of theological statements rather than on academic precision. In Theses 56-63, he argues quite intently that it is the meaning of the words that are to be taken, rather than the literalness of the words themselves.

But what of the claim by the Reformers that Luther is confusing and muddling the two natures? I would argue that in fact, Luther is protecting the distinct natures of each. In Argument 17, Luther says that "that unity of the two natures in one person is *the greatest possible*" (emphasis added). Luther emphasizes the unity over the separation because to do the latter would lead to saying that either the divine nature or the human nature is stronger than the one person. This, in turn, would lead to a denial of the power and existence of either nature; if the divine nature is stronger, the human nature is pushed out, and if the human nature is stronger, the divine nature is pushed out. Neither of these options is acceptable, for if the human nature is pushed out Christ's salvation of humans is not accomplished, and if the latter is pushed out, Christ's salvation is impossible. Thus, Luther prioritizes the unity in order to preserve the two natures and thus Christ himself. Luther himself argues that while denying predication of God and man is correct on a philosophical level, it ends up denying any "relation between the creature and the Creator, between the finite and the infinite." (Arg. 20) Since this would then deny the

relationship between Christ, the cross, and salvation, theologically the Christian must argue "not only to establish a relation, but a union of the finite and the infinite." (Ibid.)

What Luther is doing, contrary to the Alexandrian Fathers and the medieval theologians, is reversing the flow established in the early church that effect was only from the divine to the human. By insisting so strongly on unity, combined with his deep pastoral care, Luther is willing to let Christ's humanity affect Christ's divinity, as it were. He is also reacting against understandings of the two natures that would deny the unity. Thus, in what appears to be a dismissal of Augustine's metaphor of *habit*, Luther states that "nothing more heretical could be said than that human nature is the clothing of divinity. ... For clothing and a body do not constitute one person, as God and man constitute one person. (Theses 37-38) He also takes issue with the imagery that began with Origen, of the coming together of the two natures as an iron in the fire. (Thesis 43) In Origen's usage, such a metaphor referred to the presence of the human soul being immersed in the divine Word, taking on the divine heat of the Word without corrupting it by the presence of the human sword. Luther's objection is not entirely clear, but given his previous emphases on unity, one can postulate that it is because there is no true unity between sword and fire. Finally, he also denies that Athanasius' comparison of the union of God and man to the union of soul and flesh to be inadequate because the soul separates from the flesh after death, while the divine nature never separates from the human. (Thesis 44)

This understanding of Luther did not develop late in his life. Dennis Ngien writes a detailed and lengthy essay on Luther's development of the *communicatio idiomatum*, in which he notes that as early as 1522, Luther demonstrated an Antiochene understanding of Christology,



“affirming that what is attributed to the one nature of the person is attributed to the whole.”<sup>56</sup> In 1538, in his commentary on John 14, Luther wrote that “whatever this Person, Christ, says and does is done by both, true God and true man, so that all His words and works must always be attributed to the whole Person and not divided, as though He were not true God or not true man. But this must be done in such a way as to identify and recognize each nature properly.”<sup>57</sup> In this quote, it is evident that Luther’s concern is that the person of Christ remain whole and undivided, and that the statements about Christ, regardless of the actual words, must not be interpreted to mean separation, but to point to unity, through the communication of the idioms.

*John Calvin - France/Switzerland - 1509-1564 C.E.*

Calvin's doctrine of the two natures is similar to Luther's in vocabulary, but not in actual meaning. While Calvin attests to the Chalcedonian formula of two natures in one person, and agrees that the *communicatio idiomatum* is the means by which these two natures are in communication, the actual intent of his words is quite different than Luther's. After examining Calvin's theology more closely, it will be easy to see why the followers of Luther and the followers of Calvin came to such disagreements with one another.

As is to be expected at this point, the doctrine of the incarnation to which the communication of the two idioms is derived, is reliant upon Calvin’s soteriology. To that, we must first turn. Calvin's most-used metaphor or title for describing Christ is that of "Mediator." Calvin proposes that humans are estranged from God, and that to overcome that estrangement,

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<sup>56</sup> Dennis Ngien, “Chalcedonian Christology and Beyond: Luther’s Understanding of the *Communication Idiomatum*” *Heythrop Journal* XLV (2004), 54-68.

<sup>57</sup> LW 24, 106 in Ngien, 57.

the Son of God, who is both man and God, came down to bring together the divine and human natures so that we and God could be together, and so that God would "dwell with us." In order to "swallow up death," "conquer sin," and "rout the powers of world and air," the Mediator needed to be both true God and true man. "The self-same Son of God [became] the Son of man, and had ... so taken what was ours as to import what was his to us, and ... make what was his by nature ours by grace." (II, xii, 2)

Calvin makes the link that Christ taking on human flesh brings us into a filial relationship with God through sacrifice and expiation. Thus Calvin's understanding of Christ is laden (one might say unbearably laden) with language of sacrifice and suffering, to the degree that Christ's obedience even in suffering is lifted up as one of the things that takes away God's wrath.

However Christ as a man is not capable of undergoing such suffering and obedience alone, thus the divine nature must help: "since neither as God alone could he feel death, nor as man alone would he overcome it, he coupled human nature with divine to atone for sin that 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." (II, xii, 3) Interestingly, in this statement Calvin appears to separate the human and divine natures via functionality; the divine nature does one thing and the human nature does the other thing. Despite Calvin's ongoing insistence of the unity of the natures, he exhibits a tendency to highlight the separation of the two natures more often than their unity.

Calvin uses the word "assumed" to describe the process through which the person of Christ incorporates the human nature. Several times, Calvin uses the phrase "clothed with our flesh," which, combined with other phrases, makes it easy for others (i.e. later Lutheran theologians) to interpret Calvin as considering the flesh of Christ to be a kind of mask. (II, xvii,

4; II, xviii, 1; I, xiii, 28) He speaks of the Son of God "concealed under the flesh" and, in referring to when the Kingdom of God will come fully, states that we will have a direct relationship with God and Christ will no longer need to be a mediator, and "Christ's own deity will shine of itself, although as yet is covered by a veil." (II, xiv, 3) Calvin's use of the word "veil" along with "conceal" leads me to question whether Calvin considers Christ's human body something that can be taken off and put on as necessary. Indeed, in describing the relationship of the two natures of Christ, Calvin argues that "Christ would not have called his body a temple (John 2:19) unless divinity, as distinct from the body, dwelt therein." (II, xiv, 4) Such language of dwelling implies that the body is a shell, without a nature of his own.

Even Calvin's use of the *communicatio idiomatum* underscores the separation of the two natures, rather than the unity as Luther's use does. Calvin attests that Scripture sometimes speaks about attributes of Christ that are relevant only to his humanity, sometimes about attributes that are only related to his divinity, and sometimes about ones that "embrace both natures but fits neither alone." (II, xiv, 1) In emphasizing the unity of the one person, these attributes can be described as interchanging, but this must be done with great care. Calvin calls this exchange the "communicating of characteristics or properties." (II, xiv, 2) It occurs "in the crucifixion and sacrifice of Christ's flesh" and in that event, "the things that [Christ] carried out in his human nature are transferred improperly, although not without reason, to his divinity." (II, xiv, 2)

There are two things worth noting here. The first is that Calvin distinguishes (for what reason is not clear) between the nature and the properties/characteristics/things-the-nature-does. That is, in describing the *communicatio idiomatum*, Calvin does not talk about the communication of natures, as Luther sometimes does, which might imply a communication of

essences, but of the communication of properties and/or actions. This is a different level of communication that very clearly does not attempt to change one nature or the other by implication. It is a communication that preserves the distinction between the two natures in a very obvious way. Additionally, the contextualizing of such communication in the event of the crucifixion and sacrifice, rather than in the hypostatic union (ie. birth and incarnation), implies that Calvin sees such communication occurring only with Christ's soteriological function, and not in Christ as a person.

The second thing to note is Calvin's use of the word "improperly" in describing such communication. Calvin goes to great lengths in both Book I and Book II to describe the ways in which Christ is divine. It is clear that he favors the divine nature within Christ over the human nature, and the language of "improperly" indicates the discomfort he feels that the human nature might in some way contaminate the divine nature. Calvin seems intent on protecting the deity, and asserting its superiority, and speaks of the divine nature of Christ as hiding under the human nature. Although this is surely not Calvin's intent, such language could be interpreted to mean that Christ wasn't truly human, or not completely embedded in his humanity, and that he took it off and put it on, while his divine nature was always there. It is easy to see how this could be interpreted as denying a true union. However, Calvin's intent is to ensure Christ's soteriological accomplishments, therefore he emphasizes Christ's divinity, even if Christ's humanity must pay the price.

This may be because of the way that Calvin envisions the two natures operating within the one person. His primary emphasis is establishing that the Word did not "confusedly mingle with the flesh" and nor was there a "confusion of substance." Calvin asserts that the presences of

divinity and humanity joined so that “each retains its distinctive nature unimpaired.” (II, xiv, 1) The one person of Christ thus seems to function as a kind of container, holding the two natures within it without providing for much interaction between the two.

### *Conclusion*

According to Pelikan, Luther “and his followers developed and elaborated a doctrine of the relation between the two natures in Christ that matched or exceeded, for metaphysical complexity, that of the ancient Alexandrian theologians. Calvin and his followers denounced this Christology as a grotesque betrayal of ‘sola Scriptura’.”<sup>58</sup> It is ironic that Luther should be accused of moving outside the realm of Scripture, but it is also true that Calvin’s belief that Luther’s emphasis on the unity of Christ was not represented in Scripture is well-founded. Both Calvin and Luther had particular reasons for emphasizing unity or distinction to the degree they did, but as both affirmed, in word if not in theology, the Chalcedonian formula of two natures in one person, it might be argued that they could have exhibited more graciousness in interpretation towards the other.

The confusion between Luther’s theology and the Reformers occurred in part because the Reformers believe that the communication was “of properties, not of natures” within the one person.<sup>59</sup> Luther, on the contrary, argued that the communication was of the natures, whereby what belongs to one nature is communicated to the person, and thereby to the other nature. It is interesting to review a Catholic perspective on the counter: Kereszty, unlike Protestant

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<sup>58</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)* The Christian Tradition Volume 4 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984) 322.

<sup>59</sup> Pelikan, vol. 4, 355.

theologians/historians, argues that Luther in fact “misunderstands the doctrine of the Councils. He does not see any difference between a statement which attributes the *idiomata* (properties) of both natures to the one person and a statement which attributes the *idiomata* of one nature to the other nature.”<sup>60</sup> Kereszty interprets the Councils as meaning the first interpretation, and rejecting the second. That is, he believes that the communication of the *idiomata* are vertically communicated (as it were) between the human nature and the divine person and the divine nature and the divine person. The second model, which is what Luther advocates and is rejected by the Councils, is a communication between the human nature and the divine nature, with no reference to the divine person (other than perhaps as a medium of that communication).

But is this truly the case? Kereszty is relying on Luther’s writing from *On the Councils and the Church* which was written in 1539, rather than on the *Disputation* referenced here, which was written in 1540. To be sure, that is not a great difference in time, but it must be acknowledged that Luther has never been described as a systematic theologian. Nevertheless, Kereszty does admit that Luther’s concern in his statements on the *communicatio idiomatum* is to protect the redemption of humankind by the cross, even if it means proposing that God died there. Further, the Council of Chalcedon argues that the two natures “combin[e] in one person and hypostasis—not divided or separated into two person, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God, Logos, Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>61</sup> An understanding of the *commuicatio idiomatum* that follows the first interpretation that Kereszty proposes could be interpreted to mean that the two natures are disconnected from each other, except for existing side-by-side in one person. This constitutes a separation that Chalcedon would seem to oppose. It is my belief that Luther

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<sup>60</sup> Kereszty, 226.

<sup>61</sup> Pelikan, vol. 1., 264.

understood the problems of too much separation between the natures (in that God would become too removed from humankind) and swung to the other side in order to make his point. (In no way can Luther be claimed as refraining from hyperbole.) His emphasis on the humanity of Christ is an effort to maintain the unity of both natures, whereas previously, the emphasis on divinity by Christian theologians actually fractured that unity. Kereszty sees Luther as at the extreme end of the pendulum, when he is really just attempting a correction.

Calvin, on the other hand, fell more in line with the first understanding, that the communication of the idioms was between the natures and the person of Christ. This would appear to me to be too much of an emphasis on the action of the divine (as Person) with the result that he denies the value of human nature. Further, his understanding of the *communication idiomatum* (along with Kereszty's) leads to the question of how Christ can act if there is no communication between the two natures. If only the properties are exchanged and nothing else, how can the two wills exist or operate together? Chalcedon certainly does not argue for two modes of action, one divine and one human. Rather, it argues for one hypostatic union, wherein action is unified between the human and divine natures. While Calvin argues that this happens in the divine person, it makes irrelevant any contribution of human nature, which is perhaps the point of Calvin's soteriology.

Although it is outside the scope of this paper, and not covered in the sources on which this exam is based, it is necessary to mention that the entire Reformation project of the doctrine of the Incarnation, both Lutheran and Calvinist, is really a theological debate about the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The argument, which was instigated by Ulrich Zwingli's rejection of the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine of Communion, prompted Luther

and later Calvin to develop different understandings of what was meant by the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Reference to the earlier Councils encouraged Luther to accuse Zwingli of Nestorianism for denying the real presence, while Calvin saw strains of Eutyches in the Lutheran doctrine that the bread was truly Christ's body.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Pelikan, vol. 4., 158.



### ***The Enlightenment - Question 1***

The German Enlightenment scholars brought together empiricism and historicism in new ways.<sup>63</sup> Led by the development of biblical criticism, these theologians came to an understanding that “by the incarnation, the God beyond time had voluntarily become subject to the sequence of time, and so it was possible – and permissible – to subject the history of that life within time to the study of historical evidence.”<sup>64</sup> For those interested in matters of faith, that meant that revelation was to give way to reason, and to what could be deduced from empirical data. Faith became, as it were, a matter of proofs, either concretely or rationally established through one’s experiences: “Only when revealed truths thus become truths of reason can human reason find certitude and repose in God.”<sup>65</sup> Into this fertile ground entered Gotthold Lessing who arguably revolutionized the area of theology, and Christology, with his views on historicity.

*Gotthold Lessing - Germany - 1729-1781 C.E.*

In “On the proof of the spirit and of power” (1777) Lessing sets up an epistemology for faith between revelation that we personally experience directly and that which others claim to personally experience but which we know of only through “historical knowledge.”<sup>66</sup> (83) Lessing presents these as two different modes of knowing, and assesses them for their ability to offer “proof” on which to base one’s rational faith. Lessing, demonstrating the thought of the

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<sup>63</sup> The Enlightenment in Germany (*Aufklärung*) took a different form than the Enlightenment in England or France. This essay will focus on its development within Germany.

<sup>64</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)* The Christian Tradition Volume 5 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989) 90.

<sup>65</sup> Toshimasa Yasukata, *Lessing’s Philosophy of Religion and the German Enlightenment: Lessing on Christianity and Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 143.

<sup>66</sup> Gotthold Lessing, “On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power,” in *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, edited and translated by H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 83-88. Citations refer to page numbers.

Enlightenment, believes that rationality is important and that faith is to be arrived at through reason and logical thinking. Personal experience of a miracle is sense-data to be incorporated rationally into one's religious schema, and so in this respect, it is not quite accurate to set revelation and reason as opposites. Rather, they are to be viewed in light of a dialectical tension.<sup>67</sup>

Lessing observes that the contemporary problem for Christians is that there are no longer any miracles or direct, personal experiences of God's divine revelation. There are only "reports" and "testimonies" of events that happened in the past, but no such events are happening in the eighteenth century. (84) Having thus determined that the first mode of knowing is impossible today, he moves on to question whether these reports carry the same authority or "truth" for the basis of rationally-derived faith as the actual events themselves.

Lessing is blunt: no, these reports cannot carry the same authoritative weight because "historical truths cannot be demonstrated." Since we cannot travel back into the past, there is no way for us to know whether or not something actually happened. The past is closed to us. Thus, "if no historical truth can be demonstrated, then nothing can be demonstrated *by means of* historical truths. That is, *contingent truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason.*" (85) We can never know the past, so we cannot base our rational faith on events of the past. Regardless of whether the miracles actually happened (and Lessing explicitly does *not* deny this), one's faith should not come from such historical "proofs," of which there are none anyway. Further, the argument that the historians were divinely inspired is also erroneous because such claims are themselves historically based, and thus unprovable.

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<sup>67</sup> Yasukata, 140.

And so Lessing argues that one cannot use the historical *fact* of Jesus' resurrection (which itself cannot be proven due to its taking place in the past) to argue that belief in the divinity of Christ is thus required. They are in different "class[es] of truth"; Christ's historical humanity cannot prove Christ's divinity. (87) "I do deny that they can and should bind me to the least faith in the other teachings of Christ. I accept these truths for other reasons." (86)<sup>68</sup> Within this morass of the contingent nature of history, Lessing finds himself on one side of his famous "broad and ugly ditch" which he cannot cross. Historical accounts cannot *prove* experiences of Christ's divinity, and such experiences are not being repeated today.

To be fair to Lessing, he was not using this argument to propose an abandonment of faith. In his essay, Lessing does hold the belief that Christ rose from the dead and was the essence of God because the tradition that passed them on, whether historically accurate or not, has born "fruit" that nurtures him. That is, people believe them to be true, and out of such belief live lives that demonstrate Christ's resurrection, as goodness. Lessing finds the effects of people's beliefs to bear good fruits and have authoritative weight, even if their beliefs themselves do not. Lessing simply denies that such effects are the result of historical attestations of Christ.

Although Lessing does not say as much in this short essay, the implications are that the historically-based insistence on the humanity of Christ is compromised since we have no way of proving what he did or did not do. Simultaneously, the experience-based insistence on the divinity of Christ is compromised because his miracles no longer contemporarily occur. This results in a troubling conclusion, in which experiences of Christ within earthly parameters of

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<sup>68</sup> Eventually, Lessing's complete commitment to the principles of the *Aufklärung* led him to conclude that the progress of humanity's intellectual capacities would be such that there would be a "*new, eternal gospel*," superseding Christianity just as Christianity has superseded Judaism. "The education of the human race," §86, (1780). *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, 217-240. Citations refer to section headings.

time and space, whether past or present time, are both lifted up as necessary for faith and also acknowledged to be nonexistent. This connection of humanity to history, coupled with Lessing's rejection of historical proofs and emphasis on personal experience, thus necessitates a relativization of Christ's concrete human existence in favor of the experience of his divine transcendence, which is primarily that of love. Since the human Christ cannot be proven and is no longer experienced, his divine transcendent nature is all that remains, which is immaterially experienced as love.<sup>69</sup> Due to the constraints of history, Christ's divine nature is necessarily prioritized.

While H. B. Nisbet argues that Lessing never professed his own faith in any explicit way, leading to much debate as to his actual religious beliefs, the last work of Lessing, "The education of the human race," written only three years after "On the proof," mitigates the strength of that argument.<sup>70</sup> Still holding to the non-authoritative nature of history, but nonetheless believing in the existence of Christ, Lessing argues that Christ's reliability as the teacher of truth is not compromised by his historical existence. (§59) Christ's teaching, of "an inner purity of the heart with a view to another life," continues to be valid even today. (§61) It is important to note, however, that this Christ is no longer historically located. In fact, he appears to have been turned into an ideal instead of a person; the Son of God becomes, for Lessing, "the independently existing sum of [God's] own perfections," separate from God and yet perfect as God is perfect. (§75)

Lessing's writings exemplify the concerns that came with modernity: history is interpreted. A historical consciousness was arising that would cause theologians to reevaluate the

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<sup>69</sup> The emphasis on God as love is demonstrated throughout Lessing's play, "Nathan the Wise."

<sup>70</sup> Nesbit, 13.

basis for their theology, combining both a skepticism of the historical “fact” with a skepticism of any philosophy that was not embedded in actual reality. Although he was “neither a theologian nor a philosopher by profession,” his influence on the German theologians who followed him cannot be denied.<sup>71</sup>

This optimistic new view on what could be accomplished by the human mind through reason and rationality, combined with the new “historical consciousness” that saw humankind as developing throughout the stages of history, led many (philosophers and theologians) to believe in the evolution of human civilization.<sup>72</sup> The “Lessingian principle” of the dialectical tension between revelation and reason emerged as “the conception of human history as the self-development and self-revelation of the human spirit.”<sup>73</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, though not strictly an Enlightenment theologian, constructed an entire history of religions based on the understanding that there was a progression within human intellectual development. Although Hegel and Lessing both envisioned a religion that progressed even beyond Christianity, many theologians of the time considered Christianity to be the height of intellectual reasoning (and thus of civilization).

*Schleiermacher - Germany - 1768-1834 C.E.*

Building from Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), which argued for the distinction between *das Ding an sich* (the thing as it is in itself) and things as they appear to us, the intellectual ideals of the Enlightenment were soon challenged by the Romantics.<sup>74</sup> This new

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<sup>71</sup> Yasukata, 5.

<sup>72</sup> James C. Livingstone, *Modern Christian Thought: The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006) 36.

<sup>73</sup> Yasukata, 143.

<sup>74</sup> Livingstone, 84.

wave of theologians believed that rationalism was not infinitely progressive. Instead, it was limited because it ignored the unmeasurable, internal experiences of feeling and spirit. Our rationality, or reason-based thinking, needs to be balanced by our feelings and intuitions, as well as by an awareness that our observations of empirical data are influenced by our own experiences and contextual conditioning. These experiences were most often described as encounters with an "Infinite Spirit,"<sup>75</sup> and as will be seen, they were nuanced in complex ways by the impact of historical consciousness.

Schleiermacher is the best-known of the German Romantic theologians. Most famous for his presentation of faith as the "absolute feeling of dependence," he argued for an understanding of God as an intuitive consciousness of the self and its relationship with the Infinite. This consciousness is what influences our religious beliefs and informs our rational doctrines, rather than the reverse, and it is manifested in our daily living as historically embedded creatures. This portion of the essay will review how Schleiermacher was able to bring together both feeling and history, moving away from the externally transcendent, abstract God of the scholastic period. (His Christology will also be reviewed, with additional detail, in the answer to the next exam question.)

Drawing on the Kantian insight that all understanding is conditioned by our context, Schleiermacher proposes that "the pure historicity of the Redeemer, however, involves also this fact, that He could develop only in a certain similarity with His surroundings, that is, in general after the manner of his people." That is, as a person embedded in a particular historical environment, with actual historical relationships, the Redeemer developed as all other children in

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<sup>75</sup> Livingstone, 85.

his situation did. Further, as a human, "even this God-consciousness, however original in its higher powers, could only express or communicate itself in ideas which He had appropriated from this sphere" (§93.3). Thus, the Redeemer did not express ideas about God using Zoroastrian parallels, but relied on Jewish conceptions of God, or on parables from his local environment. Yet, "His particular spiritual content ... cannot be explained by the content of the human environment to which He belonged, but only by the universal source of spiritual life in virtue of a creative divine act," by which Christ became the Word (as it were) (Ibid.). In other words, Schleiermacher believes that the Redeemer transcended his existing religious environment (i.e. Second Temple Judaism) in his apprehension of God, moving beyond it in his God-consciousness. Contrasting the Redeemer's historical conditionality with his "universal source of spiritual life," it becomes clear that Schleiermacher is working with the tension between ideality and historicity, or, as he comes to define it, the tension between the divine and human natures.

Schleiermacher thus describes Christ as fully human, or, as he writes, having "the complete identity of human nature in Him," and in this way, *like* all men (§94.1). Yet human nature is naturally "self-differentiating," both because of and in spite of the uniqueness of each historical context, and so Christ is also truly described as being *different* from all other humans (§94.2). However, a "new implanting of God-consciousness which creates receptivity in human nature," which occurs at the "beginning of [Christ's] life," frees him from the "detrimental influences" of his historical context that would lead him to resist God's activity within Him (§94.2). Like Hegel, Schleiermacher acknowledges the historical conditioning of Christ's temporal location, but also sees that particular conditioning as corrosive to a true religious relationship with God. The implanting of the consciousness of God results in Christ's

sinlessness, which distinguishes him from all other humans. While sin for Christ is possible, it is never actualized, and never determinative (§98.1). Because of the God-consciousness within him, Christ has been protected from the historical influences that would lead him to sin and as he grew, he came to take on that resistance to sin naturally.<sup>76</sup> Thus, while Schleiermacher attributes historical context to the human development of Christ and to his expression/language of experience of the indwelling of God, he denies the effect of that context on Christ's *spiritual* existence. Instead, he proposes that Christ's relationship with divinity is the result of the "innermost fundamental power" of the "existence of God" in Christ (§96.3). Christ's humanity is the "organism ... which both receives and represents" this divine power, as a kind of "intelligence" (Ibid.).

Roger Haight describes Schleiermacher's doctrine as "the historically mediated Christian form of the experience of absolute dependence," in which, "through the historical influence of Jesus, people are drawn by the power of God into a new God-consciousness that amounts to the forgiveness and removal of sin."<sup>77</sup> Schleiermacher's Christology thus exemplifies the Modern period's incorporation of historical consciousness, yet I would argue that it is done without historical accountability. As Haight notes, Schleiermacher ignores the actual historical events of Christ's life, denies that they have any influence on his spiritual development, and it can be seen in *The Christian Faith* that Schleiermacher rejects the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ as valid events for his doctrine, since they do not contribute to establishing the Person of Christ. (§99) While Schleiermacher argues for the historical existence and location of Christ, he

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<sup>76</sup> In Schleiermacher's anthropology, humans are naturally without sin, but contextualized by their environment to sin. To import an anachronism, for Schleiermacher, sin is nurture, not nature.

<sup>77</sup> Haight, 304, 306-7.



nevertheless leaves the particularities of that historical existence vague, creating an ahistorical idealization of Christ's actual historical location.

*The Enlightenment - Question 3*

Idealism emerged as the nineteenth-century interpretation of the anti-scholastic movement that we see Luther engaging in. As a reaction to what was perceived as abstract philosophizing, Idealism wanted to connect ideas to historical reality. The Romantics, like Schleiermacher, saw this historical reality manifesting in feelings and emotions, as one's immediate sense-based reaction to the events going on around one's self. On the other hand, the strict Idealists, like Hegel, believed that historical reality was best manifest in the rationality of human thought as it was expressed in concrete terms and language and actualized in the now. Feeling is too subjective of an experience, resulting in intuitive leaps of logic that cannot be replicated,<sup>78</sup> and cannot help one to reach the level of Spirit, which was Hegel's ultimate goal. This essay will review Hegel's theology of the Incarnation of Christ in order to understand why I argue that he posits a too-divine Christ, thus rejecting the history-affirming principles of Idealism. Then, it will return to Schleiermacher's Christology in order to understand why his understanding of the Incarnation places the divine nature "in jeopardy."<sup>79</sup>

*G.W.F. Hegel - Germany - 1780-1831 C.E.*

Following the work of Peter Hodgson as he interprets Hegel, I will analyze Hegel's theology of the incarnation by means of a three-step process, as he develops it through the "possibility, necessity, and actuality of the reconciliation accomplished by the incarnation of God in Christ."<sup>80</sup> As Hodgson notes, Hegel redefines 'reconciliation' and 'incarnation.' I will argue that

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<sup>78</sup> Michael Allen Fox, *The Accessible Hegel* (New York: Humanity Books, 2005) 31.

<sup>79</sup> Pelikan, vol. 5, 210.

<sup>80</sup> Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 155.

this is a consequence of Hegel's emphasis on spirituality over corporeality and his ultimate goal of human transcendence to the realm of the Spirit, resulting in a too-divine Christ.

To begin, however, it is important to understand that what Hegel means by 'incarnation' is the "unity of divine and human nature" (3:109)<sup>81</sup>. This unity is understood to be 'the divine idea,' which God is intent on realizing. This unity actually consists of a transcendence over "locality, nationality, condition, life-status ... [where] Human beings are equal; slavery is intolerable" (3:109). (As will be seen later, this transcendence is accomplished in the transformation effected by Christ's death.) As transcendence over particularity, it is the means for redemption, or 'reconciliation', as Hegel calls it, which overcomes sin by enabling the "original and the final divine-human condition," bringing together divine and human, infinite and finite. (Hodgson, 157) In this process, "divine and human nature enter into a unity wherein both have set aside their abstractness vis-a-vis each other." (3:211) (Hegel, reacting to the "rationalist theology of the Enlightenment,"<sup>82</sup> emphasizes throughout his work the need to make concrete what is abstract.<sup>83</sup>) In this unity of divine and human nature, the human and God come together as human is created to be.

However, in order for this to occur, it must be possible that "humanity implicitly bears within it the divine idea ... as its own substantial nature" (3:109). It is not enough for humanity to have a conscious awareness of God, as Schleiermacher proposes, but God must be an integral part of the human.

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<sup>81</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Volume III The Consummate Religion, edited by Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Citations refer to volume and page number of this edition.

<sup>82</sup> Kereszty, 243.

<sup>83</sup> How Hegel reconciles his objection to the "abstract" and yet still believes in the universal Spirit, as removed from corporeality, is a subject for another time.

But why is incarnation necessary? The short (and cynical) answer is that Hegel needs Christ to take on human flesh so that Christ can die and sublimate that human flesh. In other words, Hegel requires the human nature of Christ in order to provide the concrete venue for demonstrating the power of the infinite (i.e. God), to overcome the finite (i.e. his concrete self). The long answer runs thus: because humans require empirically verifiable evidence of God (a principle of German Idealism), such reconciliation needs to happen in a single individual who embodies the divine-human unity, one who is empirically certain and 'immediate' in its presentation to humankind (3:110). Since God has conceived of God's divine idea (of the unity of divine and human nature), God "*has to generate the Son*" in order to make the idea an actuality and avoid remaining philosophically abstract. (3:215) Incarnation is thus necessary for demonstrating the *possibility* of our reconciliation with the divine infinity, and to respond to our "need to love the particular universally in the concrete." (3:216, 218-19) There is no other way to demonstrate the infinite subsuming the finite, without exhibiting the finite first.

All of this possibility and necessity is actualized in the "particular Jesus of Nazareth," whose individuality proves "concrete subjectivity." That is, "in order for it [this divine-human unity] to become a certainty for humanity, God had to appear in the world in the flesh [John 1:14]" (3:313). To exhibit finitude, a single human must exist within a historical context as a concrete, fleshly being. This is the crux of Hegel's incorporation of historicity into his theology. The divine idea, in order to be comprehended by thought (rather than Schleiermacher's "feeling"), must exist in history, "the concrete actualization of the universal in a particular historical individual."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Livingston, 124.

Hegel emphasizes that this concrete manifestation is unique, and "not present in the others, but only in one from who all others are excluded" because "singularity in general is something universal once more." (3:313) That is, only by becoming a particular singularity can the universal become an actuality. There is no such thing as a plural, or general, singularity, and therefore no actuality. (According to Hodgson, at this point, in his insistence on singularity, Hegel is "reflect[ing] a prejudice that privileges unity over diversity and regards Christ as qualitatively superior to all other saviour figures."<sup>85</sup>) Christ, as the one in whom the divine idea comes to reality, is thus unique – particular and singular.

So how does this actuality take place in Christ's human nature? As a human existing in history, (which Hegel interestingly describes as Christ's 'nonreligious' existence), "he is *immediately a human being* in all the external contingencies, in all the temporal exigencies and conditions, that this entails." (3:316) Christ, as a human, is finite, involved in human relationships, born (although Hegel dismisses that it is from a virgin), influenced by his surroundings (although transcending them, in the case of his religion), and dying.

As the "God-man," Christ exists in a spiritual manner, that is, filled with the Spirit. When he speaks as the God-man, he "expresses it immediately from God, and God speaks it through him. His having this life of the Spirit in the truth, so that it is simply there without mediation, expresses itself prophetically in such a way that it is God who says it." (3:320) Here we see Hegel already leaning towards the perfection of the divine in Christ to the extent that the human mind as mediator is denied. While Hegel still describes this as part of the nonreligious view of Christ, his emphasis on the activity of the Spirit gives privilege to the noncorporeal. To describe

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<sup>85</sup> Hodgson, 161.

Hegel's Christology with Chalcedonian vocabulary, it clearly emphasizes that the Person of Christ is divine, and not human, though at this point still existing in history.

Regarding the unity, Hegel contends that "it is the Son of Man who speaks thus, in whom this expression, this activity of what subsists in and for itself, is essentially the work of God – not as something suprahuman that appears in the shape of an external revelation, but rather as [God's] working in a human being, so that the divine presence is essentially identical with this human being." (3:320) As far as unity goes, Christ "*is* the divine idea." (3:115, emphasis added.) Here, Hegel moves away from Docetism, and its appearance of humanity, and attempts a true unity between divine and human by proposing joint activity, where the two cannot be distinguished from one another. God's presence is thus (temporarily) physically manifest. Hodgson, in fact, points to the above statement as "Hegel's construal of the doctrine of incarnation: ... God and humanity are connected without canceling but rather strengthening human subjectivity and personality."<sup>86</sup>

Yet I contend that while human subjectivity and personality may be left intact, actual concrete, material human existence is not, despite Hegel's Idealism. Hegel's "unity" must in no way be misconstrued as a new interpretation of the Chalcedonian formula. Despite his definition of incarnation as the "unity of divine and human nature," the process by which Hegel understands this union leaves no room for the "fully" human, as human is understood to include the actual body, physically and temporally constrained. This is because Hegel prioritizes the spiritual over the concrete, the infinite over the finite, and ultimately, the immaterial over the material. He explicitly says that the reconciliation (made concrete in the incarnation) "can only

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<sup>86</sup> Hodgson, 168.

come about by the separation being sublated" (3:211), by which he means that the divine takes over the human,<sup>87</sup> and that "in the unity of divine and human nature everything that belongs to external particularities has disappeared – the finite [itself] has disappeared." (3:212) How the human body is exempt from such "external particularities" is hard to imagine. Hegel's divine idea presents itself in the historically located Christ, "in all his contingency, in the whole range of temporal relationships and conditions ... but there is at the same time in this sensible mode a divestment of the idea, and this has to be sublated." (3:216) This sense-able mode, that of the historical body (although Hegel never uses that word), is bereft of the divine idea and thus must be overcome. It appears that Hegel wishes to erase the historic manifestation of the divine idea, that is the human physical, corporeal existence of Christ, in order to protect the divine *idea* of the unity of divine and human nature. In the sublation (*aufheben*) of human finitude, there is no "fully" human component; only the spiritual capacity of the human is kept..

This sublation takes place in the death of Christ. Stating that "it is precisely in [Christ's] death that the transition into the religious sphere occurs," (3:322) Hegel is exposing his overriding philosophical commitment to the concept of *aufheben*,<sup>88</sup> which ends with the sublation of humanity by the divine. "Through death the human element is stripped away and the divine glory comes into view once more – death is a stripping away of the human, the negative." [3:326] Humanity, insofar as it represents finitude (as evidenced by physicality), is expunged. Further, in his 1831 lectures, Hegel argues: "For the true consciousness of spirit, the

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<sup>87</sup> An interesting study would be that of Hegel's 'sublation' (*aufheben*) through a post-colonial lens, in which sublation is compared to the process of colonization.

<sup>88</sup> *Aufheben* is commonly interpreted as the result of a process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. However, Michael Allen Fox convincingly presents Hegel's use of the term in such a way that it is understood that such "synthesis" is actually an incorporation of the thesis and antithesis to the degree that they are "implicit, but transformed." Fox, 45. I would argue that this transformation is so complete that, in the case of the incarnation, the human nature is no longer human, but something new. Thus, there is no manner by which Christ can be argued to have been *fully* human.

finitude of humanity has been put to death in the death of Christ. This death of the natural has in this way a universal significance: finitude and evil are altogether destroyed. Thus the world has been reconciled; by this death it has been implicitly delivered from its evil.” (3:323, fn. 199) And finally, “Death is both the extreme limit of finitude and at the same time the sublation of natural finitude, of immediate existence, the overcoming of divestment, the dissolution of limitation.” (3:126) Hegel’s linkage of finitude, evil, death, and immediate existence (by which he means historically-embedded living), leads one to doubt his commitment to corporeal human existence.

What occurs next is the transfiguration of human finitude “into the highest – the highest love.” (3:131) In the resurrection of Christ, which is most explicitly *not* a bodily resurrection, Christ transitions “into a new mode of existence, a transition from sensible to spiritual presence.”<sup>89</sup> Once Christ has sacrificed his body, i.e. his human finitude, and died, the divine sublates that finitude, and Christ becomes divine spirit. This is, indeed, the ultimate goal for humankind: “Humans ... ought to be spirit *explicitly*, not merely *implicitly*; their merely implicit potential, their natural being, must be sublated.” (3:202) Hegel’s goal for humankind is its spiritualization, and once Christ has died, Hegel has no use for his human body, and thus no need for a bodily resurrection.

As I stated earlier, it would appear that Hegel relies on the human nature of Christ only in order to provide the concrete venue for demonstrating the power of the infinite to overcome the finite. I must confess to being left confused as to how Hegel intends to promote Idealism and resist the abstract rationality of “traditional” philosophy, while at the same time he desires the

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<sup>89</sup> Hodgson, 173.



sublation of finitude by the infinite. Nevertheless, Hegel is well-known for the emphasis he places on the Spirit and his prediction that all religions, including Christianity, will culminate in a religion of the spirit, rather than of the body, and this brief essay has demonstrated that his theology in fact incorporates humanity only to transcend it, ultimately leading to no incorporation at all.

### *Schleiermacher*

Having addressed Schleiermacher's Christology as it relates to his understanding of historical epistemology in the previous section, I will now address the remaining components of his doctrine of the Incarnation insofar as it displays a tendency towards what Pelikan believes is a troubling overemphasis on the human nature of Christ. While Schleiermacher argues in *The Christian Faith* (1821-22) that a proper doctrine of Christ must address both the Person (through the concept of His dignity) and the work (through the concept of His activity), the constraints of this exam limit my analysis. Therefore, I will focus on Schleiermacher's understanding of Christ the Person as the most appropriate way to explore Schleiermacher's views and Pelikan's response.

Schleiermacher begins by developing his concept of the "ideality" of Christ, which is that of the perfect "subject of the God-consciousness" (§93.1) Schleiermacher describes Christ as possessing a "sinless perfection" and communicating that perfection to believers through the believing community. (§88.2) This perfection is exclusive to Christ, who obtains it because he has "an unhindered potency of the God-consciousness." (§88.4) In making this statement, Schleiermacher is thus arguing that this consciousness completely determines Jesus' actions - he

incorporates his awareness of the Infinite *into* his self-consciousness to such a degree that they operate together. However, it is important to take note here that the agency begins with the human, in that the self-consciousness incorporates the God-consciousness, and not the other way around. By God-consciousness, Schleiermacher means that "immediate self-consciousness" (i.e. feeling) that there is something that transcends us. This awareness is pre-reflective, and it is an acknowledgement on an intuitive level that we are finite, existing within a greater Infinite. (§36.1) This awareness of the immediate self-consciousness existing with the greater Infinite is the "feeling of absolute Dependence." (§4.2) Schleiermacher considers it to be God-consciousness, because in this awareness is also the realization that *God* is the object of this feeling. (§4.4) "Absolute dependence is the fundamental relation which must include all others in itself. This last expression includes the God-consciousness in the self-consciousness." (§4.4)

The relationship of the God-consciousness to the self-consciousness poses problems for Schleiermacher when it comes to the traditional credal formulae of two natures in one person. While Schleiermacher agrees in principle with the intent of the credal statements to describe the one Person of Christ as together with God and together with humankind, he raises objections to traditional formulations on the grounds of "scientific" inaccuracy and improper ecclesial usage. (§96) His first major argument is that it was an error from the beginning to describe the divine presence of God as a "nature," as it both denies the very essence of God and implies co-equivalence with human "nature." Nature is that which is "divided and conditioned," which is precisely what God is not (§96.1). Therefore, using it to describe the divine is wrong, a move that brings some balance to Pelikan's assessment of a too-human Christ. Its use is also problematic for understanding the relation of the natures to the one Christ. Schleiermacher points to several

resultant interpretive errors. First, the two natures can be understood as combining to make a third nature, which is then composed of two natures, but not *fully* either. Second, the two natures are kept entirely separate, with no connection between the two OR the second nature is limited by the first nature, with the result that one nature takes over the other.<sup>90</sup> (Schleiermacher argues that this becomes even more problematic when addressing the issue of the two wills, a frequent offshoot of trying to understand the two natures, because even when the wills are described as being together, i.e. "willing" the same thing, "what this results in is only agreement, not unity" (§96.1). Rather than a true union, there are two parallel wills working together.)

Having critiqued the concept of two natures, Schleiermacher also takes issue with the doctrinal assertion that the union occurred through a process by which the divine nature "assumed" the human nature into the divine Person (§97). Aside from the now-problematic term "nature," Schleiermacher notes that this assumption overrides any human activity, as the human activity must necessarily be passive in such an event, "an interpretation which necessarily borders on docetism, and threatens the true historicity of Christ" (§97.1). (By historicity, Schleiermacher means the human manifestation of Christ, which is historically embedded in a particular context.) Ultimately, Schleiermacher argues that "the theory of a mutual communication of the attributes of the two natures to one another also is to be banished from the system of doctrine," as it misrepresents the divine and the human within Christ, leading to either an erasure of humanity or a degradation of divinity (§97.5).

Having abandoned the doctrinal formulae, Schleiermacher states his theological goal as defining "the mutual relations of the divine and the human in the Redeemer, [so] that both the

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<sup>90</sup> Math is evidently not Schleiermacher's strong suit.

expressions, divine nature and the duality of natures in the same Person (which, to say the least, are exceedingly inconvenient) shall be altogether avoided" (§96.3). His new proposal establishes the human nature of Christ (as discussed in the previous essay), but lest his readers interpret this to mean that Christ is only *generally* different from humans as all humans are different from one another, thus reducing Christ's uniqueness and erasing his "dignity," Schleiermacher also proposes that Christ is unique because he is "the only 'other' in which there is an existence of God in the proper sense, so far, that is, as we posit the God-consciousness in His self-consciousness as continually and exclusively determining every moment, and consequently also this perfect indwelling of the Supreme Being as His peculiar being and His inmost self" (§94.2). By this, Schleiermacher means that Christ is the only human in whom God's activity is pure and total, unaccompanied by any existing human "passivity" that would hinder God's activity. Only in Christ is the experience of God's presence so strong that Christ experiences God as Himself. Thus, "He alone mediates all existence of God in the world and all revelation of God throughout the world" (Ibid.). Christ is both human, like us, and unique in that God's presence lives in him in an unrestricted manner.

Having done away with the concept of assumption, Schleiermacher offers a new proposal for the means by which the unity of human and divine occurs: through a "new implanting of God-consciousness which creates receptivity in human nature," which occurs at the "beginning of [Christ's] life." It is this implanting of the God-consciousness in Christ that leads me to disagree with Pelikan's assessment. His desire to differentiate between human nature and the divine (which cannot be described as a nature) is an attempt to establish a qualitative difference between the human and the divine that protects, rather than endangers, the divine in Christ. In

fact, the significance of Schleiermacher's ahistorical tendency, as outlined in the previous essay, leaves me in doubt as to the fully *human* nature of Christ. While Schleiermacher is right to question the use of 'nature' in connection with divine, which simply affirms that using it with human is important, Christ, as *fully* human, must also exhibit that division and conditioning, or he cannot be fully human. Schleiermacher does not incorporate this finite-nature fully into his understanding of the Incarnation.