

## WEEK 7 | THE THEANTHROPIC PERSON OF CHRIST PT. 2

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. . . one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ

### CREED OF CHALCEDON

#### I. THE COMMUNICATION OF PROPERTIES

##### A. The Issue

The issue to which we now turn is describing *how* the two natures relate to each other in the one person Jesus Christ. How do the two natures—and the attributes essential to them—relate in such a way that the integrity of each is preserved without diminishing the unity of the person? This question has to do with how the properties of each nature are predicated upon the one person.

##### B. The Wrong View: *Perichoresis*

Some in the early church—especially leaders in the Eastern Church—answered this question with the concept of *perichoresis*. They believed that Christ’s divine nature completely permeated his human nature, though the two remained distinct. Thus, the divine attributes (e.g., omniscience, omnipotence, etc.) are given either occasionally or continuously to the human nature, but human attributes are not given to the divine nature.

There are some significant issues with this concept:

1. First, it undermines what Scripture teaches about Jesus “growing in wisdom” over the course of his life. If his divine nature had fully permeated his human nature at conception, then he would have already possessed complete knowledge in his humanity by virtue of his divine omniscience.

2. Second, it seems to treat the natures as acting subjects, with the divine overpowering the human nature. If this were true, it would undermine Christ's ability to render genuine human obedience to the Father on our behalf, thus disqualifying him from accomplishing a genuine atonement for us.

### C. The Right View

Rather than seeing the divine nature permeating and, in a sense, overpowering the human nature, it is proper to say that the attributes of both natures have been communicated to the person in such a way as to protect the integrity of both natures and the unity of the person simultaneously. Louis Berkhof writes,

This means that the properties of both, the human and the divine natures, are now the properties of the person, and are therefore ascribed to the person. The person can be said to be almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, and so on, but can also be called a man of sorrows, of limited knowledge and power, and subject to human want and miseries. We must be careful not to understand the term to mean that anything peculiar to the divine nature was communicated to the human nature, or vice versa; or that there is an interpenetration of the two natures, as a result of which the divine is humanized, and human is deified. The deity cannot share in human weakness; neither can man participate in any of the essential perfections of the Godhead.<sup>1</sup>

There are several elements of Chalcedonian Christology that illuminate this point:

1. *Enhypostasia* – in-personal humanity

The idea of *anhypostasis* would need further clarification and was discussed at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553AD. Rather than thinking of Christ's human nature as impersonal (as *anhypostasis* implies), it is better to think of it as *in-personal* (*enhypostasis*). That is, the human nature (*ousia*) has its "person" in the "person" (*hypostasis*) of the Son. Christ's humanity has no independent existence apart from the divine Son. His humanity was not incomplete because it lacked personhood; rather, its personhood is in the person of the Son. This is an important clarification because, as we have discussed previously, "What has not been assumed has not been healed." To be our Redeemer, it was necessary that Christ be fully human as we are (Hebrews 2:14–17).

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Banner of Truth, 2021), 324.

## 2. *Communicatio Idiomatum* – Communication of Attributes

Rather than perichoresis, the church instead affirmed the language and concept of *communicatio idiomatum*, or the communication of properties. The teaches that “the attributes of each nature are ‘communicated’ not to the natures but to the person of the Son.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, what is true of each nature is also true of the Son, the person who is the subject of both, but not true of the other nature. This is how Scripture can speak of the person Jesus Christ possessing the divine perfections while also possessing those attributes characteristic of humanity.

## 3. *Communicatio Operationum* – Communication of Operations

Closely connected to the concept of the communication of attributes is the communication of operations. Here, we are speaking about Christ’s work in relation to his two natures. Because the two natures are united in the one person, the entire work of Christ is a divine-human work, so that he is able to save us completely.

## 4. *Communicatio Charismatum/Gratiarum* – Communication of Gifts/Grace

The *communicatio charismatum* or *gratiarum* has to do with the gifts and grace Christ exhibited in his earthly ministry. Specifically, it addresses Christ’s relationship to the Holy Spirit in his works (especially his miraculous works). Recall that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:10; Luke 1:35) and was given the Spirit “without measure” (John 3:34). Thus, as a man he was equipped and enabled to live a life of obedience to the Father by virtue of the indwelling Holy Spirit. As John Owen wrote, it is the Spirit who fills Christ’s human nature “with grace according to the measure of its receptivity. . . to the utmost capacity of a creature; but it was so, not by being changed into a divine nature or essence, but by the communication of the Spirit unto it without measure.”<sup>3</sup>

### I. THE *EXTRA*

The *extra* refers to the reality that Christ, in his incarnation, not only retained his divine attributes but also continued to exercise them as the eternal Son of God. In other words, he “continues to live a divine life ‘outside’ (*extra*) his human nature; Christ’s human

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<sup>2</sup> Wellum, *The Person of Christ*, 116.

<sup>3</sup> John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, 16 vols. (London: Banner of Truth, 1965), 3:159–88, 1:93.

nature does not totally circumscribe the life of the Son.”<sup>4</sup> This accords with what Scripture teaches in passages like Colossians 1:17 and Hebrews 1:3. From conception, the Son lived his life totally “in” the flesh and totally “outside” the flesh. As Cyril of Alexandria writes,

When seen as a babe and wrapped in swaddling clothes, even when still in the bosom of the Virgin who bore him, he filled all creation as God, and was enthroned with him who begot him. For the divine cannot be numbered or measured and does not admit of circumscription. So confessing the Word [to be] hypostatically united, we worship one Son and Lord Jesus Christ, neither putting apart and dividing man and God, as joined with each other by a union of dignity and authority—for this would be an empty phrase and no more—nor speaking of the Word of God separately as Christ, and then separately of him who was of a woman as another Christ, but knowing only one Christ, the Word of God the Father with his own flesh.<sup>5</sup>

John Calvin gives further clarity to this doctrine when he writes that the Son’s “eternal properties were exercised by Christ during the Incarnation not by the humanity of the One Person but by the divinity of the One Person.” It should be noted that this teaching defends the integrity of *both* Christ’s deity and his humanity, for this affirms that his obedience—even his death—was voluntary and done as a man without his divine nature compromising his full humanity.

## II. DYOTHELITISM

Significant to the distinction between person and nature developed at Chalcedon was the question of the will. Is the will connected to the nature, or to the person? If the former, then we would affirm, that Christ has two wills; if the latter, one will. At the Third Council of Constantinople in 681AD the church took up this question.

The council formally condemned Monothelitism (teaching Christ had one will) and affirmed that the will is connected to the nature and, thus, Christ had a divine and a human will.

### A. The Will as a Part of the Nature

A significant point of discussion was where to locate the will: in the nature or in the person. Maximus the Confessor (580–662) made a significant and crucial distinction between the “faculty of will,” which he located in the nature, and the

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<sup>4</sup> Wellum, *The Person of Christ*, 119.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Willis, *Calvin’s Catholic Christology*, 59.

“concrete acts of the will,” which he located in the person. All rational beings have a “faculty of will” by virtue of their nature, but it is the person who does the concrete act of willing.<sup>6</sup> Christ, because he has two natures, has both a divine and a human will, and is able to will as both God and a man. “In Christ, there is one willer (the Son) who has two wills, hence the ability to will as human and as God.”<sup>7</sup>

## B. Significance of the Two Wills

### 1. They maintain Christ’s full humanity

Both Apollinarianism and Monophysitism taught that Christ had only one will because they identified the will with the person. This would mean that Christ only had a divine will (the divine person, the Son, existed before the incarnation). However, as Donald Macleod notes, “For one thing, whatever doubts may attach to the definition of will, it is clear there can be no true human nature without the ability to make human choices.”<sup>8</sup> We would have to ask if Christ was fully human and, if he was not, how could he fully redeem us?

### 2. They are decisive for soteriology

As hinted at above, this issue brings back up Gregory of Nazianzus’s maxim, “what is not assumed is not healed.” If Christ did not have a human will, then our wills would not have been redeemed. Further, it would have removed Christ’s ability to act as our model of volitional obedience to the will of the Father (as the divine Son, Christ’s divine will is the same will as the Father because it is located in the one divine essence). His obedience would not have been genuine, and thus not salvific.

### 3. They are required for Trinitarian orthodoxy

If the will was located in the person, then we would have to affirm that each person of the Trinity has a will unique to that person. This would be a surrendering of divine unity. Instead, orthodox Trinitarianism affirms that

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<sup>6</sup> A helpful analogy is the distinction between a person who thinks and their ability to think; the former is an act of the person, while the latter is an attribute of their nature.

<sup>7</sup> Wellum, *The Person of Christ*, 124–5.

<sup>8</sup> Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, 179.

the Father shares and exercises the one divine will *as the Father*, and the same is true for the Son and the Spirit, respectively.

4. They are necessary for Christ's genuine obedience

As noted above, it is necessary that Christ have a human will so that he, as the Last Adam, could render genuine human obedience to the Father where the first Adam failed. In this way, Jesus becomes our new federal head, and his righteous obedience is imputed to all who are united to him by faith.

### III. CONCLUSION

Having surveyed the Biblical data pertaining to the person of Jesus Christ, we are left with some questions that remain difficult to answer regarding the union of his two natures. To what degree was Jesus aware of his divine nature throughout his life? Was he fully accessing his divinity? What role did the Spirit play in his works? Below is a tentative conjecture that seeks to answer some of these questions. However, we must recognize we are seeking to understand something that is, ultimately, impossible to fully comprehend. Thus, we must tread carefully and hold a conjecture like this loosely.

Jesus' self-consciousness and activity were and are both Divine and human, but starting with His birth, He matured in His humanity in His awareness and application of Divine attributes and human attributes. This maturation was under the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Spirit is the Spirit's controlling influence in a person's life (cf. Eph 5:18). It does not imply utter passivity on the part of the one being filled. Rather, the Spirit takes what an individual has and guides it, enhancing it where needed. In the case of Christ, no enhancement was needed from the Spirit's own personal powers. Rather, the Spirit could draw on Jesus' Divine capacities and urge that they be applied by Jesus in conscious application. But this conscious application, in the human state, was not always using all His Divine capacities visibly. Omniscience and omnipotence were not continually applied/exhibited publicly in the human realm. And Jesus' omnipresence was not manifested (except for the statement in John 3:13, if the majority reading is accepted, and if the Patristic and the Reformers' interpretation of the passage is accepted). Jesus was aware of His Divine perfections, but He consciously used them, in His human acts, according to the will of the Father by the leading of the Spirit. Several lines of evidence support this support this conclusion:

**A. Jesus Was Led and Empowered by the Holy Spirit – Luke 4:1, 14**

**B. Jesus Had the Spirit Without Measure – John 3:13**

**C. Jesus Did Miracles by the Power of the Spirit**

1. Matthew 12:28 – But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
2. Luke 4:18-19 – “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”
3. Acts 10:38 – “. . . how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”

#### **D. Jesus Did Not Know the Time of the Second Advent – Mark 13:32**

#### **E. Jesus Did Miracles in Conscious Demonstration of His Deity**

1. Calming a Storm

Mark 4:39-41 – And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

2. Walking on Water

Matthew 14:25, 32-33 - And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. . . And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

3. Healing a Blind Man

John 8:12 – Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

John 9:5-7 – As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

#### 4. Raising Lazarus from the Dead

John 11:25-26 – Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

John 11:43-45 – When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him

#### F. Jesus’ Knowledge Proved His Deity

The following proofs are from the Gospel of John. The signs that John recorded were “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31).

1. John 1:47-49 – Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”
2. John 2:19-22 – Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.
3. John 13:18-19 – I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.

#### G. Jesus’ Perfect Holiness Proved His Deity



1. Hebrews 7:26 – For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.
2. 1 John 3:5 – You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.