



Peninsula City Church

The Hypostatic Union

Was Jesus 100% God & Human?

Michael Podhaczky

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Was Jesus 100% God & Human?

Introduction

Q. Could you explain why Jesus needed to be 100%, God and human?

Last year Jacob in one of his last messages for the year, mentioned that Jesus was 100% God and human. I know that everyone noticed that and understood what he meant, haha. What does this mean, and what is the importance of this statement? Well, I thought that I would try to demystify what it all means in light of what he said. It is an eternal mystery regarding Jesus Christ, which the church has wrestled with over the past two thousand years. As it has been said,

“The great mystery of God becoming human remains beyond our unaided comprehension.”¹

As a result, there have been some interesting ideas, which have been taught on the matter.

In the account of the life of Jesus Christ given by John, he highlighted this issue. That is he said that,

¹ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:1,14 NASB).

How could Jesus Christ have two natures at the same time? So, if the Word was God and became flesh, what does this mean? We know as Christ-followers that the Word mentioned here is Jesus Christ. We know that John said He was God and that the Word became flesh or a human being.

Hence, in this brief paper, we will briefly review this idea and see what we can learn. Firstly, we will look at what it is not and what it means for Jesus to have a two-fold nature but still be one Person. Then secondly, due to this, we need to see how it impacts our lives. It was this very thing that the early church wrestled with to try to understand and record what it meant, which we are doing today.

Some terms which will be used that will be helpful to define here are,

- The Incarnation: It reveals God the Son the pre-existed Christ in a human body; He came in the flesh or human body. It is God becoming human from the Latin *in carne*, i.e. in the flesh.²
- Hypostatic Union: The fundamental characteristic of Jesus’s nature, substance or being.
- Kenosis: It is Jesus emptying Himself into a human body.

1. What does it all mean?

Q. Could you explain what is meant by the idea of Jesus having a two-fold nature?

We would have all read the Bible and at times and seen Jesus as God, doing things that only God can do. However, at other times read about Jesus just like any other human being. So, is He God, or is He a person? The simple answer to this is ‘Yes.’ That is, He was and still is 100% God and 100% human in every way except He did not sin. The issue has been discussed and debated throughout church history.

¹ Casey, Michael. *Fully Human Fully Divine: An Interactive Christology*. (Mulgrave, Vic: John Garratt Publishing, 2004), 4.

² Torrance, Thomas F. *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 348.

Consequently, there have been numerous conclusions on the matter, and some were incorrect in their findings. What needs to be remembered here is that we are dealing with an eternal mystery regarding Jesus Christ. What is the best perspective to have this side of heaven if that is so?

It all deals with the issue called the union of His two natures or technically 'the hypostatic union.' Although the phrase is not mentioned in Scripture, it is essential to our faith. Throughout the New Testament, we can see Jesus Christ as God and as a human being, joined as one Person. So, He has what has been called two natures. The joining of these two natures is something, which only God can do. The idea of the hypostatic union comes from the Greek word *ὑπόστασις* and is pronounced hoop-os-tas-is and means the substance or subsistence of a thing. The concept of hypostasis is the fundamental characteristic, which makes up Jesus' nature, substance or being. The word *ὑπόστασις* is made up of two words, one being *hypo*, meaning under and the other word *hístēmi*, meaning to stand. Consequently, it carries the following notion,

"...to possess) standing under a guaranteed agreement ('title-deed'); (figuratively) 'title' to a promise or property, i.e. a legitimate claim (because it literally is, 'under a legal-standing') – entitling someone to what is guaranteed under the particular agreement... *hypóstasis* ('title of possession') is the Lord's guarantee to fulfil the faith He inbirths."³

Wow, that is a fantastic truth fulfilled and proclaimed in the coming of Jesus Christ to earth. That He came as God and a person as "the Lord's guarantee to fulfil the faith He inbirths."⁴ It was this very guarantee that we see in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is that teaching that Jesus is both God and human, all in the plan and will of God. However, as it has been pointed out,

"It is not sufficient to know and believe that in some way or other there are two natures in Christ, the divine and the human. We must add that they have been joined together so intimately in a personal union that there is one and the same Person () consisting of and subsisting in these two natures."⁵

In the middle of trying to understand this matter of importance, different individuals and Church councils arrived at their theological explanations of the Deity and Humanity of Christ. All these took place more or less within the first four centuries after Christ's resurrection. The result is that six deviations from what we believe as Christ-followers here at Peninsula City Church emerged regarding the Person of Christ. For example, we believe that,

"Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of humanity, who was supernaturally conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. He is the eternal Son of God, fully God and fully human. He died for humanity's sin, was buried, and rose again on the third day. He also rose bodily at His ascension back to heaven and received His rightful place as King. He will come again a second time at the predetermined time."⁶

Then some deny that Jesus Christ was a human while on earth, believing that He was a kind of phantom and only appeared to have a body. They reject that he had any full human experiences. Whereas others teach that Jesus took on a human body, but not the whole of human nature. They teach that he had a human body, but not a human soul because his soul was God's Spirit; Jesus Christ was neither fully God nor fully human, but a blend of God and human.

³ "Hupostasis." <https://biblehub.com/greek/5287.htm> (16th December 2021).

⁴ "Hupostasis." <https://biblehub.com/greek/5287.htm> (22nd December 2021).

⁵ Chemnitz, Martin. *The Two Natures in Christ*. Vol. 6. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2007), 67.

⁶ "Appendix - Statement Of Faith." In *Constitution of Peninsula City Church Inc.* An Incorporated Association in Victoria, 25 February 2021: No. 4, 38.

Some Church Councils had to deal with some wrong ideas regarding theological matters. One of these was the correct understanding of Jesus Christ. One of the issues was the two natures of Christ. These councils highlighted what the hypostatic union was not and what it is from a biblical perspective. It is outlined in the following two points.

a. What it is not

Firstly we will look at what it is not. So, three central councils grappled with part of the matter of Christ's two natures. The councils came to an inevitable conclusion as they sorted through the various teaching on the issue. Many a Christ-follower struggled to find the correct balance between Christ's God and human natures. Some of the teachings went too far and overplayed Jesus' God nature to downplay His human nature. While others went too far the other way, overstating His human nature to the marginalisation of His God nature. Some church councils dealt with these issues (official church leadership meetings from the various regions). Some of these councils were,

- Council of Nicaea (325 AD), from where we also get the Athanasian Creed⁷
- Council of Constantinople (381 AD)
- Council of Chalcedon (451 AD)

When dealing with the hypostatic union at these councils, they found the two extremes between Christ's humanity and God. In addition to this, some struggled with the unity of the two natures of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, those who strayed from the belief in the full deity of Christ, and then those who strayed from the belief in the full humanity of Christ. Plus, some could not understand how His natures were unified.

There was the overemphasis of Jesus being God to the loss of His full humanity,

- **Docetism:** Jesus was fully God but only appeared to be human. This teaching comes from the Greek word *dokeo*, which means appears, seem, or suppose.⁸ It was Gnostic teaching that assumed that matter or material things as being evil. So, God being holy could not create anything evil. The argument was that if matter or material is evil, and Jesus is the Son of God, He would have to be evil if He had a body. So, Jesus only seemed to be a human being but was only God. He appeared to have a body.
- **Apollinarianism:** The name of this teaching comes from its founder Apollinaris. He was the bishop of the church of Laodicea (in modern Turkey) in the 4th century. He rejected any idea that Jesus had a totality or completeness of humanity. So, according to this teaching, Jesus did not have a human will, only the will of God. That is, Jesus took on genuine humanity, but not the whole of human nature; otherwise, he would be sinful. He reasoned that to speak of two natures meant two persons or a double personality.

So those who deny that Jesus Christ was really a human while on earth, believing that he was a kind of phantom and only appeared to have a body. They reject that he had any full human experiences. Whereas others teach that Jesus took on a human body, but not the whole of human nature. They teach that he had a human body, but not a human soul because his soul was God's Spirit; Jesus Christ was neither fully God nor fully human, but a blend of God and human.

⁷ "The Origin Of Hypostatic Union in Early Church History." <https://withalliamgod.wordpress.com/2012/04/09/the-origin-of-hypostatic-union-in-early-church-history/> (22nd December 2021).

⁸ "Dokeo." <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/dokeo.html> (10th January 2022). Spence, Alan. *Christology: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 9.

There was the overemphasis of Jesus being a human being to the loss of Him being fully God,

- **Ebionism:** The teaching denies the authenticity of Jesus being God and sees Him as a mere human. The idea came about from a group known as the Ebionites. It came from the word *Ἐβιωναῖοι*, Ebionaioi meaning, poor. It was especially indorsed by a small group of Jewish Christians who were unorthodox in their teaching. They saw Jesus as merely a human being, but who was chosen by God since He satisfied the requirements of the Mosaic Law.⁹
- **Arianism:** It denies the completeness of the deity of Jesus. The name of this teaching was due to one Arius, who was a presbyter in the church in Alexandria in North Africa. The teaching holds that Jesus was a created being only has the status of a demigod and the greatest of all created living things. Jesus was the firstborn of all creation but not fully God like the Father.

So, persons or groups who deny that Jesus Christ was God view Him simply as the Son of Mary and Joseph and no more. Jesus Christ only became aware of the Holy Spirit at His water baptism, and then it was the Holy Spirit who performed the miracles, not Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is said to have left Jesus when he died, so He was buried like any other person. This teaching states that the divine nature of the Holy Spirit came upon the human Jesus at his baptism and departed shortly before His death, showing that He was not God.

Some struggled to understand the unity of the Person of Christ,

- **Eutychianism:** The idea came from a monk of the 5th century named Eutyches from the church at Constantinople. The teaching confuses the nature of Christ. It holds that there were two natures before Jesus Christ's incarnation. However, there was only one combined nature after it. Christ has one nature now since his humanity is 'swallowed up' by his deity at the incarnation. In the union, the God nature was the main part, and the human being blurred with the God nature. It is like a drop of water in the ocean. It, therefore, implies that Jesus is neither an actual human being nor truly God. As a result, He could not act as a mediator for our sin.
- **Nestorianism:** The idea came from a monk and a presbyter at Antioch in the 5th century named Nestorius before becoming the Patriarch at Constantinople.¹⁰ The teaching separates the two natures of Christ to the point that it denies the real union of the two natures. So, it teaches that Christ has a two-fold personality, with no communication between the two natures in Christ and the Logos only assumed His humanity.¹¹ It holds that Jesus' God nature would be altered if there were a union between the human and divine natures.

b. What it is

So, now that we have briefly seen what it is not, we will attempt to see what it is for us to understand it. It is crucial to realise that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully human at the very same time while on earth. In other words,

⁹ Spence, *Christology*, 11.

¹⁰ Spence, *Christology*, 45.

¹¹ Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 111.

“...in the incarnate Christ, there are and remain two complete and distinct natures, the divine and the human, each of which possesses and retains its own essential attributes without any confusion or abolition of them.”¹²

He is the eternal Son of God, who took on a genuine human body and nature in every way yet remained without sin. At the same time, He was fully and completely God. The divine and human natures of Jesus Christ are a mystery. The two natures remain distinct and retain their own characteristics, but they are now eternally and indivisibly united together in one Person.

On this matter, it has been stated in the Westminster Shorter Catechism Q 21,

Where it is asked and answered,

Q. “Who is the Redeemer of Gods elect?”

A. “The only Redeemer of Gods elect is the Lord Jesus Christ: who, being the eternal Son of God, became human, and so was, and continues to be, God and human in two distinct natures, and one person forever.”¹³

Some of the passages that have been used to support this answer from the catechism are the following,

John, in chapter one, highlighted the truth of the incarnation.

¹ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:1,14 NASB).

John, in chapter 20, emphasised both Jesus’ humanity and that He is God.

²⁶ “After eight days, His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut (*locked*), and stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side, and do not be unbelieving but believing.’ ²⁸ Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (Jn 20:26-28 NASB).

A theory called Kenosis was proposed in the 1800’s and is based on Phil 2:5-7, which teaches that Jesus emptied Himself of Him being God while on earth. However, this is not the case, as the English translations can be a bit misleading here. It would be better translated as “He laid aside His God privileges or was of no reputation” while here on earth. In doing so, He relied on the Holy Spirit just like we do. I will say more on this teaching at a later date.

⁵ “Have this attitude in (or *among*) yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped (i.e. *utilised* or *asserted*), ⁷ but emptied (Gk *κενόω kenoo pronounced ken-o’-o*) Himself (i.e. *laid aside His privileges*, or of *no reputation*), taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:5-7 NASB).

Paul was dealing with the teaching of the Gnostics. They taught that God in a human body could not be linked. However, Paul said that is not true since we have the evidence in Jesus Christ.

“For in Him, all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Col 2:9 NASB).

¹² Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 162.

¹³ “The Westminster Shorter Catechism Q 21.” <http://www.freepres.org/WCFShort.htm> (10th January 2022).

The following three verses bring together the idea of Jesus' two natures and God and a human being.

“And He is the radiance of His (*God*) glory and the exact representation of His nature and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;” (Heb 1:3 NASB).

“You (*the Father*) have made Him (*Jesus Christ*) for a little while lower than the angels; You have crowned Him with glory and honour and have appointed Him over the works of Your hands;” (Heb 2:7 NASB; cf. Ps 8:5).

“Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook (or shared) of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;” (Heb 2:14 NASB).

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15 NASB).

The following two of the statements of the church creeds highlight the teaching of the conclusion of the church in the fourth and fifth centuries. These were based on an in-depth study of the Scriptures over the time that they were together. What needs to be remembered here is that there were numerous views on Jesus Christ's natures swirling around at the time. These church leaders had to make sense of all of this and produce a unanimous conclusion and write these creeds. The word creed comes from the Latin word *credo*, which means ‘we believe.’

i. Nicene Creed

It was written to wrestle with the various ideas being taught at the time on various biblical issues. One of the issues was that of the Person and Nature of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the group formulated the following creed. What is mentioned here is only the section relevant to our discussion here. Nicaea was in Asia Minor (modern Turkey and Iznik), about 138 km southeast of Constantinople.

“We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen...

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. Through Him, all things were made. For us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the Virgin Mary and became man. For our sake, He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, He suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day, He rose again in fulfilment of the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.”¹⁴

Yes, there is indeed only one eternal God. However, Jesus Christ is also God the Son and is not created. He is not lower than God the Father but is one with Him. Therefore, God can be known both as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ cannot be created since no created being can save sinners, but their Saviour can be God.

¹⁴ “Nicene Creed.” <https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/nicene.htm> (11th January 2022).

“An essential feature of being a creature is that one requires being redeemed. No creature can save another creature. Only the creator can redeem the creation.”¹⁵

ii. The Athanasius Creed

This creed was written in response to some teaching by Arius, the presbyter in the church in Alexandria in North Africa. The teaching holds that Jesus was a created being only has the status of a demigod and the greatest of all created living things.

“That we worship one God in trinity and the trinity in unity, neither blending their persons nor dividing their essence. For the Person of the Father is a distinct person, the Person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another. But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their Majesty coeternal.

What quality the Father has, the Son has, and the Holy Spirit has. The Father is uncreated; the Son is uncreated; the Holy Spirit is uncreated. The Father is immeasurable, the Son is immeasurable, the Holy Spirit is immeasurable. The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Spirit is eternal.

And yet there are not three eternal beings; there is but one eternal being. So too, there are not three uncreated or immeasurable beings; there is but one uncreated and immeasurable being.

Similarly, the Father is almighty; the Son is almighty; the Holy Spirit is almighty. Yet there are not three almighty beings; there is but one almighty being.

Thus the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. Yet there are not three gods; there is but one God. Thus the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord. Yet there are not three lords; there is but one Lord.

Just as Christian truth compels us to confess each Person individually as both God and Lord, so catholic (universal) religion forbids us to say that there are three gods or lords.

The Father was neither made nor created nor begotten from anyone. The Son was neither made nor created; He was begotten from the Father alone. The Holy Spirit was neither made nor created nor begotten; He proceeds from the Father and the Son. Accordingly, there is one Father, not three fathers; there is one Son, not three sons; there is one Holy Spirit, not three holy spirits.

Nothing in this trinity is before or after, nothing is greater or smaller; in their entirety, the three persons are coeternal and coequal with each other. So in everything, as was said earlier, we must worship their trinity in their unity and their unity in their trinity.

Anyone then who desires to be saved should think thus about the trinity. But it is necessary for eternal salvation that one also believe in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ faithfully.

Now, this is the true faith:

That we believe and confess that **our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and human, equally. He is God from the essence of the Father**, begotten before time; and **He is human from the essence of his mother**, born in time; **completely God, completely human**, with **a rational soul and human flesh; equal to the Father as regards divinity**, less than the Father as regards humanity.

Although He is God and human, yet Christ is not two, but one. He is one, however, not by His divinity being turned into flesh, but by **God's taking humanity to Himself. He is one,**

¹⁵ McGrath, Alister E. Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 49.

certainly not by the blending of His essence, but by the unity of his Person. For just as one human is both rational soul and flesh, so too **the one Christ is both God and human.**

He suffered for our salvation; He descended to hell; He arose from the dead; He ascended to heaven; He is seated at the Father's right hand; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead. At His coming, all people will arise bodily and give an accounting of their own deeds. Those who have done good will enter eternal life, and those who have done evil will enter eternal fire."¹⁶

iii. Chalcedon Creed

Written in the fifth century AD, the Creed of Chalcedon, amongst other things, dealt with our topic here of the natures of Jesus Christ. It was a document that was the outcome of the discussion on the incarnation between the church in Rome and the church in Constantinople. Chalcedon was in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), about 7 km east of Constantinople.

"Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we will with one accord teach people to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead soul and body; of one substance (Gk *homoousis*) with the Father as regards His Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards His manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards His Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards His manhood, begotten one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognised in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person – (Gk *prosopon* it usually means external appearance or face and in Latin *persona* the outward appearance of something¹⁷) and substance - (Gk *hypostasis*), not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only Begotten God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of Him, and handed down to us."¹⁸

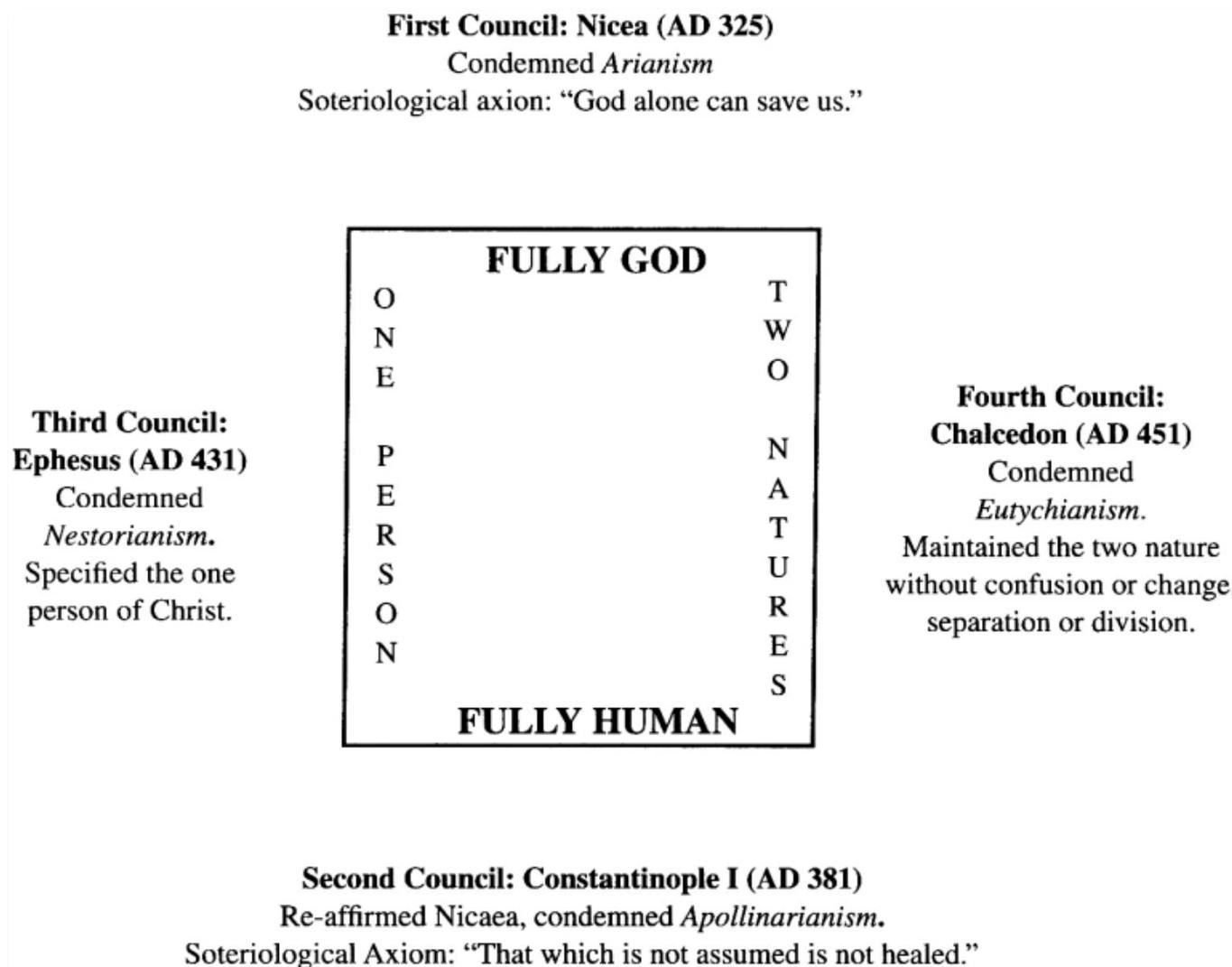
It is essential to remember that the correct teaching is that Jesus Christ has two natures: human and divine. That is, Jesus is fully God and at the very same time became fully human, possessing two distinctly separate and unconfused natures in complete unity. In light of this, how would you respond to the opening statement, "Jesus Christ did not actually have a fully human nature or fully God nature at the same time"? See the explanatory illustration of some of the points mentioned here over the next page.

¹⁶ "Athanasian Creed." <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds/athanasian-creed> (11th January 2022).

¹⁷ Need, Stephen W. *Truly Divine & Truly Human: The Story of Christ and the Seven Ecumenical Councils*. (London: SPCK, 2008), 103.

¹⁸ "The Chalcedon Creed." <http://www.creeds.net/ancient/chalcedon.htm> (10th January 2022).

So, it has been illustrated in the following way,¹⁹



Some examples of Jesus as God and human,

Jesus as God Was	Jesus as a Human
Worshipped: Matt 2:2,11; 14:33	Worshipped the Father: Jn 17
He was called God: Jn 20:28; Heb 1:8	He was called man: Mk 15:39; Jn 19:5
He was called Son of God: Mk 1:1	He was called Son of Man: Jn 9:35-37
Prayed to: Acts 7:59	He prayed to the Father: Jn 17
Was sinless: 1 Pet 2:22; Heb 4:15	Was tempted: Matt 4:1
He knows all things: Jn 21:17	He grew in wisdom: Lk 2:52
He gives eternal life: Jn 10:28	He died: Rom 5:8
All the fullness of deity dwells in Him: Col 2:9	

¹⁹ "The Origin Of Hypostatic Union in Early Church History." <https://withalliamgod.wordpress.com/2012/04/09/the-origin-of-hypostatic-union-in-early-church-history/> (13th January 2022).

2. How does it impact us?

Q. How does Jesus being 100% God and human affect us?

If we as Christ-followers trust the Bible, we should be able to believe what it has to say on this matter. The hypostatic union is an important aspect of our faith, even if we have not heard it by this phrase before. Whether we have realised or not up unto this point,

“At the heart of Christian faith is the belief that Jesus of Nazareth is fully God and fully human: two natures in one person.”²⁰

But how can we understand how it impacts our lives? I will deal with two ways here: one is by analogy and the other through Scripture.

a. Analogy

What is meant here by analogy? Well, it has been said that,

“An analogy is something that shows how two things are alike, but with the ultimate goal of making a point about this comparison.”²¹

Since we are created, finite, and sin affected, the only way we can know something like we are dealing with (Hypostatic union and the incarnation, other than by some help through the Bible) is by analogy. God is outside of our knowing unless He reveals Himself to us. So this is where analogies can help.²²

“Hypostatic union involves two crucial factors here.

- i. It tells us that we can know God only in human terms, in terms of *analogy* (comparison). All knowledge of God and His relations with humankind are analogical, for, in Christ, God has become like a human, has taken on a human image, so that we may know God, and understand His revelation in terms of the image, likeness, and analogies of humanity.
- ii. It tells us that it is not by human image, likeness, and analogies that we know God and understand His revelation, but through the *hypostatic union* of the human images, analogies, and likenesses in Jesus Christ Himself, that we may know God.²³

Three analogies that have been used throughout church history to try to explain the mystery of the Hypostatic union. However, just a warning here, we need to remember that whatever analogies we use will always be incomplete, limited attempts to explain the limitless God. We need to heed this as a warning of not pushing the analogies too far but simply seeing the comparison between them and God. So they are as follows.²⁴

- i. One of the main ones used is the sunlight and the sun. It comes from the idea mentioned in Hebrew 1:3, “And He (Jesus) is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His (the Father) nature and upholds all things by the word of His power” (NASB). So, on the one hand, the sun cannot exist without there being light, which radiates from it. Then, on the other hand, the cannot be light of the sun without the existence of the sun. The two are united as one entity, the sun. It was an analogy to try to bring about some understanding regarding the two natures of Jesus Christ.

²⁰ Horton, Michael. *Pilgrim Theology: Core Doctrines for Christian Disciples*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 174.

²¹ “What Is an Analogy?” <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-analogy> (12th January 2022).

²² Horton, *Pilgrim Theology*, 34-35.

²³ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 195.

²⁴ Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 88-91.

- ii. Another analogy is the soul being united with a person's body. It can be asked where the body ends, and the soul begins and vice versa. We have two natures. These are the material body and the immaterial the soul, but we are not two, parted, or separated into two persons, but we are one Person with two parts. So, we all have a body and a soul, but there is only one of us.
- iii. The third analogy mentioned here is that of something burning like wood or a lump of coal and the light and heat that comes from it. It is like the burning bush, which was burning but not consumed, in Exodus 3:2. "And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed" (Ex 3:2 NASB). The burning object gives off light and heat; they are part of one piece of wood, tree, coal etc.

Now, remember that these finite and fallible analogies are only to attempt to understand what is being spoken about regarding the Hypostatic union.

b. The use of Scripture

The other way we can try to understand the Hypostatic union is through Scripture. In attempting to state and summarise the issue, it has been said that,

"All of Christ's activities are thus the actions of the Person or hypostasis of the incarnate Christ. They are always performed through either His divine or human nature. The Person dies on the cross, but He does so in and through His physical body. His death is redemptive because the Person who dies is, in His divinity, the eternal Son of God, and in His humanity, He is one who fully shares in our condition. Likewise, to the one metaphysical subject or Person is attributed both the eternal divine decision to take human form and suffer death as a man and the human willingness in Gethsemane to submit to the purpose of God. The Person is one and inseparable. The capacity to will, however, is distinguishable according to the natures."²⁵

There are consequences to what we have been looking at and the light of this summary, like Christ's incarnation, hypostatic union, and the laying aside His privileges, becoming of no reputation. He took on the form of a bondservant and was in the likeness of human beings, all overlapping with each other. Following are a sample of Scriptures that should help here.

For example, as one passage says,

⁵ "Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but laid aside His God privileges, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of humans. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:5-8 NASB).

If Jesus Christ were not God, His sacrifice for sin would have been imperfect and unsuitable for divine justice. But if He were not a human being, He could not have died for our sin, as God cannot die. If that were the case, we would not have new life. As Paul said,

"For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God" (Rom 6:10 NASB).

²⁵ Spence, *Christology*, 59.

Peter also made this critical point,

“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;” (1 Pet 3:18 NASB).

Because of humanity's sinfulness, we needed a mediator (intermediary) between God and us. On the matter of Jesus Christ being our mediator, it has been said,

“In order to be the Mediator between God and mankind, so as to bring them back together, thereby saving lost humanity, Christ had to become man, while remaining at the same time God.”²⁶

That is someone who understands things from God's perspective and ours. It is this very thing that Paul said to Timothy,

“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5 NASB).

He also pointed this out to the local church in Rome,

“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3 NASB).

He came as the incarnate Son of God to know our suffering, share our pain and heartaches of life. So, as God came to earth and became a human being, He could know our pain and suffering due to sin. He understands the weakness of human nature. He was able to be the merciful Saviour of humanity. As the writer to the Hebrews said,

¹⁴ “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. ¹⁶ For assuredly, He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted” (Heb 2:14-18 NASB).

¹⁴ “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:14-16 NASB).

The Hypostatic union also allows the grace and truth of God to impact our lives. Because Jesus Christ came to earth in the way that He did in the incarnation, He was able to show us what the Father is like in His character. That is, the Father is full of grace and truth, just like Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth. Without this explanation of who the Father is and what He is like, we could not understand Him.²⁷ In Jesus as God, we see how the Father loves, has mercy, shows grace, judges righteously, and is just and faithful, to mention a few things. However, Jesus was able to live these attributes out as He lived as a person here on earth. He gave us an example of how we can and should live. Yet, the only way for us to do this is to be made all over again that is transformed through the work of the Holy Spirit of God. As our opening passage said,

²⁶ Kelly, Douglas. *Systematic Theology*: Vol. Two (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2014), 183.

²⁷ Purves, Andrew. *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation*. (Louisville, KN: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 44.

¹ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14 NASB).

Not only that, but these also overlap with things like Jesus Christ’s atoning death for sin and opening the way back to the Father for us. “The hypostatic union is an act of grace.”²⁸ As it has been rightly said,

“Hypostatic union and atoning reconciliation cannot be properly expounded (explained) apart from each other.”²⁹

So, the incarnate Christ through the Hypostatic union enables us to reach out to the broken and hurting world around us. As it has been said,

“While I might not be able to incarnate myself as Jesus did, I am called to encounter Jesus as the incarnate Person Jesus is, to share in God’s life by sharing in Jesus’ Person. And I think what the incarnation does is give me the gift of sharing in God’s life by sharing in the personhood of others. I think that the incarnation, the revealing of God’s Person in Jesus, makes personhood the very structure within which we encounter God. So to claim the incarnation for ministry is to claim that we share in God’s life, that we have union with God, through sharing in the personhood of our neighbour.”³⁰

It is the practical basis for what is called incarnational ministry. Where we have the opportunity and privilege to reach out in the power of Christ to humanity (since we are human), we can understand pain, suffering and the effects of sin on society. However, we also have the perspective of Jesus Christ to help and impart to those around us. So, the Hypostatic union is not merely academic and theological murmurings but is very practical in how it works. It, in fact, outworks through us as His mouth, hands, and feet each day to those in our path that we meet.

Some Concluding Thoughts

Q. Could you now explain why Jesus needed to be 100% God and human?

So, in conclusion, we have briefly seen that due to the will of God how Jesus Christ came in the incarnation and is, in fact, fully human and fully God. Even if we did not know that the phrase the Hypostatic union existed. Hopefully, we can see the value of this teaching in our lives. Although it is not mentioned in the Bible, we have seen that it says that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human. How could He know the human predicament if He is not as human as us? Then if He ceased being fully God, we have a real problem since God’s nature would have been compromised by sin. It is like our key verses say,

¹ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:1,14 NASB).

Jesus Christ becoming flesh (becoming human) helped Him connect with our weak and painful humanity. It enabled Jesus Christ to reveal the Father to us who had been hidden from us until then. Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of humanity, supernaturally conceived of God the Holy Spirit, and born of the human virgin Mary. The mystery is that He is the eternal Son of God, who is fully God and fully human. So, Jesus Christ’s guarantee to fulfil the faith He inbirths is fulfilled in His complete unity of natures in two distinct natures, and one Person forever.

²⁸ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 206.

²⁹ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 183.

³⁰ Root, Andrew. *The Relational Pastor: Sharing in Christ by Sharing Ourselves*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), 133

As Christ-followers, we have entered into a relationship with the incarnate Son of God because of the Hypostatic union. As a result, we are able to pastorally care for those in their pain and struggles of life. The human nature of Jesus Christ is our connection, and the God feature is the power through the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to help them supernaturally. So, today, we need to believe and apply the truth of this transformative idea of the Hypostatic union. What is it that stands out to us today? We need to use this; otherwise, it is merely all academic. Then we need to respond to what the Holy Spirit has been saying to us.

In response, we need to ask through this process:

- What personal application can be found from what has been said today?
- What is God teaching me today?
- That is, "What is God saying to me?"

How should I respond to what is being said, or so what?

- What are you going to do about it?
- What do you need to do to respond?
- Pray and respond