

THE HYPOSTATIC UNION OF CHRIST

“true God and true man”

Key question

How are we to understand the relationship between Christ’s deity and his humanity?

Key text

Philippians 2:6-8

“who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied** Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Key Definition

Hypostatic Union

Jesus Christ while being fully human and also fully divine in one person from all eternity voluntarily gave up the use of certain of his divine attributes in subordinating Himself to the Father for the period of the incarnation.

Introduction:

1. Claiming to be rational, the Christian is asked to explain or attempt to explain a seeming paradox in Christian teaching. How can Jesus be both God and man?
 2. There are four essentials to the orthodox understanding of the person of Christ.
 - a. Christ is truly God.
 - b. He is truly human.
 - c. He is one person.
 - d. There are in him two distinct natures, divine and human, clearly distinguishable and substantially different, yet undivided, inseparable, and unconfused.
- A. **Theanthropos** (a Greek term) meaning God-man. **Hypostatic** (a Greek term) meaning “substance”, “nature”, “essence” - the root or core of a person as opposed to the attributes which may vary and are an expression of the core.

This issue is important because:

1. To be a vicarious sacrifice Jesus had to be fully human.
2. To be a worthy sacrifice Jesus had to be divine.

B. Key concepts

1. **Person** = an internally consistent unit. **Nature** (human or divine) = a complex of attributes.
 - a. The single Person of the incarnate Christ retained the total complex of divine attributes and possessed all the complexities of human attributes essential to a perfect human being.
 - b. Christ was a **theoanthropic Person**, but did not have a theoanthropic nature. The divine and human attributes were distinct and not mixed.
2. The actions of Christ come from either the “will” of His divine nature or the “will” of His human nature or a blending of both.
 - a. Actions predicated on the whole Person - redemption.
 - b. Actions predicated on the divine nature - preexistence.
 - c. Actions predicated on the human nature - thirst.
3. Christ was always aware of Himself with respect to His deity and He grew in self-consciousness with respect to His humanity.

C. Key Scriptures

1. **Jn.1:14** “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth”
2. **Gal.4:4** “God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law”
3. **I Tim.3:16** “He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory”
4. **I Cor.2:8** “None of the rulers of this age understood this (the secret and hidden wisdom of God); for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”
5. **Col.2:9** “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.”
6. **Phil.2:6-8** “who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied** Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

NOTE: Kenosis (a Greek word) = “emptying”

<i>Sub-Kenotic Theories</i>	
Christ Emptied Himself of the Use of the Divine Attributes	The Logos possessed the divine attributes but chose not to use them.
Christ Emptied Himself of the Independent Exercise of the Divine Attributes	The Logos always possessed and could utilize the prerogatives of Deity but always in submission to and by the power of the Father (and the Holy Spirit). The incarnate Christ never did anything independently by virtue of his own deity.
Christ Emptied Himself of the Insignia of Majesty, the Prerogatives of Deity	The Logos emptied himself of the outward form of Deity. (This view is vague as to what is precisely meant.)

Traditional Kenotic Theories

Christ Emptied Himself of Divine Consciousness	The Son of God laid aside his participation in the Godhead when he became a man. All the attributes of his deity literally ceased when the incarnation occurred. The Logos became a soul residing in the human Jesus.
Christ Emptied Himself of the Eternity Form of Being	The Logos exchanged his eternity-form for a time-form bound down by human nature. In this time-form Christ no longer had all the attributes commensurate with Deity, though he could use supernatural powers.
Christ Emptied Himself of the Relative Attributes of Deity	This view differentiates between essential attributes, such as truth and love, and those that relate to the created universe, such as omnipotence and omnipresence.
Christ Emptied Himself of the Integrity of Infinite Divine Existence	At Christ's incarnation the Logos took up a double life. One "life center" continued to function consciously in the Trinity while the other became incarnated with human nature, unaware of the cosmic functions of Deity.
Christ Emptied Himself of the Divine Activity	The Logos turned over all of his divine roles and duties to the Father. The incarnate Logos was unaware of the happenings within the Godhead.
Christ Emptied Himself of the Actual Exercise of Divine Prerogatives	The Logos retracted the mode of the divine attributes from the realm of the actual to the potential. He retained his divine consciousness but renounced the conditions of infinity and its form.

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