Elenctic Theology: Christology

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*Part III: The Unipersonality of Christ*

## The Hypostatic Union

### Definitions[[1]](#footnote-1)

#### ***Hypostatic Union:*** The assumption of a human nature by the preexistent eternal Person of the Son of God in such a way as to draw the human nature into the oneness of the divine Person without division or separation of natures, but also without change or confusion of natures.

##### The union of the natures in Christ is a *personal* union.

##### The two natures or substances (*ousia*) subsist as one personal subsistence (*hypostasis*).

##### Note that hypostasis did not indicate a person until the time of the Cappadocian fathers (AD 380).

#### ***Anhypostatic Humanity:*** A term which applies to the human nature of Christ insofar as it has no subsistence or person in and of itself, but rather subsists in the person of the Word for the sake of the incarnation.

#### ***Enhypostatic Humanity:*** This is a term which applies to the human nature of Christ with reference to the identification of the “person” or subsistence of Christ as the eternal person of the Word which has assumed a non-self-subsistent or anhypostatic human nature. In short, the anhypostatic human nature of Christ is personalized (hypostatized) in the Person of the Logos.

##### This means Christ’s non-personal (anhypostatic) human nature receives its personality in the personality (enhypostatically) of the Logos.

##### Thus, the term “enhypostasis” describes the relationship of the anhypostatic human nature to the person of the Logos.

#### ***Coinherence of Natures (****perichoresis* or *circumincessio****)***: This is a theological term describing the two natures of Christ as coinhering or interpenetrating each other in perfect union in such a way as the human nature is never without the divine and the divine nature is never without the human.

### The Results of the Hypostatic Union

#### ***Results of the Hypostatic Union: The Communication of Attributes***

##### **Definition:** A term used to describe the way in which the proper qualities (*idiomata*) of each nature are communicated to or interchanged in the unity of the person.

#### ***The Two Basic Forms of the Communication of Attributes***

##### ***Communicatio Idiomatum in Abstracto***

###### The term “abstracto” means “natures.”

###### It indicates a flow of divine attributes into the human nature of Christ

###### This is the classic Alexandrian position. Lutherans distinguish their view.

###### Representative quote of Gerhard [Lutheran theologian]: Gerhard (Loci IV. xii.) says: “We teach that the [human] soul of Jesus in the very first moment of the incarnation was personally enriched, as with other excellences, so also with the proper omniscience of the Logos, through, and in virtue of, the intimate union and communion with the Logos. But as he did not always use his other excellences in the state of exinanition, so also the omniscience personally communicated to him he did not always exercise.” (Quoted by Bruce: *Humiliation of Christ*, p. 143.)

##### ***Communicatio Idiomatum in Concreto***

###### The term “concreto” indicates the concrete individual (i.e., the person).

###### This is not a communication of properties from one nature to the other.

###### This view is held by the Reformed.

###### **Proof of the *Communicatio Idiomatum in Concreto***

**Human Attributes Are Ascribed to the Person with a Divine Title**

*Acts 20:28—”The blood of God”*

However, note the textual issue in this verse.

*1 Cor. 2:8—Crucified the Lord of Glory*

“Lord of Glory” is a divine title, but the verse attributes crucifixion to him.

*Matt. 1:33—Mary brings forth “Immanuel”*

Immanuel is a divine title, yet Immanuel is born of a woman.

*Lk. 1:31-32—The Son of the highest conceived in the womb*

**Divine Attributes Are Ascribed to the Person with a Human Title**

*John 3:13—The Son of man descended from heaven*

“Son of man” title refers to his humanity (human title).

Yet, these activities (i.e., divine preexistence) declare His deity.

*John 6:62—Son of man ascends to where he was before.*

*Romans 9:5—The Christ, according to the flesh, is God over all.*

##### **The Proposed Genera of the Communication of Attributes (*communicatio*)**

###### **The Idiomatic Genus (*genus idiomaticum*)**

This is the predication of the qualities or attributes of both natures to the Person of Christ.

The properties of each nature belong to the Person such the God-man can, as one Person, simultaneously suffer and die while governing and sustaining the creation.

###### **The Majestic Genus (*genus maiestaticum*)**

The Majestic Genus is rejected by the Reformed, accepted by the Lutherans.

Lutherans argue this is not a communication in abstracto, but a recognition that the human nature of Christ, based on the enhypostatic relationship with the Logos, participates in the glory and majesty of God.

This view affirms that the human nature partakes of the divine attributes without losing its own attributes or conferring human attributes on the divine nature.

The Majestic Genus is the foundation of the Lutheran view of Real Presence in the Lord’ Supper.

###### **The Apotelesmatic Genus (*genus apotelesmaticum*)**

*Apotelesma* indicates a conclusion, accomplishment, or completion of a work.

In the Lutheran View, the Apotelesmatic Genus refers to the cooperation of the two natures in the union of the Person to the end of completing the work of the Messiah.

Nothing is accomplished by either of the natures apart from the communion and cooperation from the other.

The Reformed reject the Apotelesmatic Genus as a genus or subcategory of the Communication of Attributes. They view it as a separate category whereby the distinct operations of the distinct natures are brought to completion in the one work of Christ. They view this as a Communication of Mediatorial Operations.

#### ***Results of the Hypostatic Union: The Communication of Mediatorial Operations***

##### *Reformed View:* This is the common work of the two natures of Christ whereby each nature is doing what is proper to it according to its own attributes in order to complete the one work of Christ.

##### *Lutheran View*: Lutherans reject this idea and view this issue as a Sub-Genus of the *Communicatio Idiomatum*, that is, the *Communicatio Apotelesmatum*.

#### ***Results of the Hypostatic Union: The Communication of Graces***

##### This is the impartation of grace by the Logos to the human nature assumed in incarnation.

##### This category usually includes a discussion of the following topics:

###### *Grace of Union or Eminent Grace*, which elevates Christ’s humanity above all other creatures, and

###### *Habitual Graces*, which are gracious dispositions conferred by the Holy Spirit on the human nature of Christ. Habitual Graces are, in reality, the communication of Spiritual Gifts:

True Knowledge of God

Soundness and Perseverance of Will

Great power of action beyond the natural capacities of human beings

## The Consciousness of Christ

### *Christ’s Two-Fold Consciousness*

#### **Proof of Christ’s Divine and Human Consciousness**

##### *Divine Consciousness:* Jn. 8:58; 10:30; 17:5

##### *Human Consciousness:* Jn. 19:28; Matt. 27:46

#### **Christ’s Two Natures and His Two Modes of Consciousness, Divine and Human**

##### The divine consciousness is furnished by His divine nature.

##### The human consciousness is furnished by His human nature.

##### *Analogy of a Beast (Animal):* An animal can have some forms of consciousness in common with us. E.g., hunger, thirst. But it does not have a rational soul and so cannot understand the merits of the Arminianism-Calvinism debate. We experience hunger and thirst like a brute, but also enjoy these higher forms of consciousness because we have a rational nature in addition to the physical one.

#### **Christ’s Single Self-Consciousness**

##### We must avoid making Christ a schizophrenic (e.g., as in Nestorianism).

##### Analogy of human beings with two substances in one person

###### Humans alternate in what furnishes the material for consciousness all the time, but we are not schizophrenic.

###### In humans there is a fluctuation of what supplies the material of consciousness.

###### “I am hungry” comes from the body. “I love the Lord” comes from the higher, spiritual nature. Thus, there are both sensuous and spiritual modes of consciousness in a human being, but a single self-consciousness.

###### Shedd Quote: “At one moment, the man’s experience is sensuous. At another, perhaps the very next moment, it is intensely spiritual. If the nature of the individual person should be inferred from the sensuous consciousness in him, we should say that he is nothing but an animal; if only from the spiritual consciousness in him, we should say that he is nothing but a spirit. Putting the two together, we say that the person who has these different modes of conscious experience is ‘human.’”

#### **Christ’s Consciousness in His Exalted State**

##### Christ loses some of the *accidental* properties of his human nature

###### E.g., pain, thirst, suffering, death, etc.

##### Retains his essential human properties

###### E.g., being limited, finite, mutable, etc.

##### Compare with the redeemed in heaven

###### We also lose these accidental properties, but nonetheless remain human.

### Analogy of Body and Soul in a Human Being

#### This is an analogy used by the church fathers t explain the hypostatic union

#### Is a personal union

#### If my body suffers, I say “I suffer.”

### The Human Nature as Belonging to the Logos

#### It is the Logos’s human nature.

#### Therefore, when the humanity suffers, it is proper to say that the Logos suffers.

#### Example: Just as I might say that I suffer through my body (e.g., stub my toe), even so, I can say that the Logos suffers through his human nature. It’s the Logos’s suffering because it’s his nature that provides the material of consciousness.

## Christ’s Two Wills

### *Historically Considered: the Monothelite Controversy*

#### Fought out and culminated in the Council of Constantinople in 680.

#### The Council determined that Christ must have two wills to have a complete humanity.

#### Jesus Prayed “Yet not as I will, but as You will.” (Matt. 26:39)

#### *Conclusion:* Since the faculty of volition is essential to human nature, Christ must have two wills, divine and human.

### *Christ’s Two Modes of Willing (Volition)*

#### The faculty of volition is the appetitive faculty or capacity to choose what is desired as good.

#### He has finite volitions and inclinations according to His human nature.

#### He has infinite volitions and inclinations according to His divine nature.

#### That is, Christ can love God and desire fellowship with him as a man does, as well as have fellowship with the Father as a Trinitarian Person in the Godhead. This makes human choosing as well as divine choosing possible to him.

### *Two Wills but a Single Self-Consciousness*

#### Two wills are not incompatible with a single self-consciousness

#### *Analogy in the Regenerate*

##### *Quote from Shedd:* “Two wills are not incompatible with a single self-consciousness, even when they are not hypostatically united in one person. The divine will works in the regenerate will “to will and to work” (Phil. 2:13), and yet there is not duality in the self-consciousness of the regenerate man.”

### *Divine Subconsciousness?*

#### While the Logos has a divine mode of consciousness, it can be argued that aspects of His divine consciousness and omniscience operated at a subconscious level with regard to His human mode of consciousness for the purpose of functioning as a God-man. Subconsciousness can mean:

##### Existing in the mind but not immediately available to consciousness; or

##### The mental activities just below the threshold of consciousness.

#### This does not mean the Logos lost His divine nature in the incarnation. It means the Divine Omniscience is sublimated and not always immediately available—by the decree of the Trinity—to the active human consciousness of the God-Man.

#### Types of Knowledge

##### Occasional or Occurrent

##### Dispositional

### *Conclusion*

#### Christ is a *Theanthropic* Person, a God-man.

#### Shedd: “…both human and divine qualities and acts may be attributed to the God-man under any of his names.”

#### **Other Examples:**

##### Messiah is seated on the eternal throne/Messiah was crucified.

##### The Redeemer existed before Abraham/The Redeemer was born 18 centuries after Abraham.

##### Wesleyan Hymn: “Thou my God didst die for me.”

##### God suffered, was thirsty, hungered, etc.

##### Incorrect: “The divine nature died.” Correct: “The God-man died.”

1. *See* Muller, *DLGTT*, for the various definitions and discussions presented in the section on the Hypostatic Union and the Communication of Attributes. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)