

# **SPIRITUAL UNION AND COMMUNION**

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That which is now to engage our attention is the constitution of the Person of Christ, not as He existed from all eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, but as He was upon earth working out the salvation of His Church, and as He now is in Heaven at God's right hand. It was an essential part of His covenant-engagement that the beloved Son should become the Surety of His people, and in order thereto, assume their nature into union with His Divine Person, and thus become God and man in the Person of one Christ. In consequence of that union all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily or personally, in a manner and to an extent it does not, will not, and cannot, in any other. This is the next greatest mystery which is revealed in Holy Writ, being the foundation upon which the Church is built (Matt. 16:18), and concerning which a belief thereof is absolutely essential unto salvation. It is therefore impossible to over estimate the importance, blessedness, and value of this truth.

This Mediatorial union—denominated the “Hypostatic (personal) union” by theologians—or the conjunction of the Divine and human natures in the God-man Mediator, is based upon that infinitely higher union which we sought to contemplate in the last chapter [first booklet]. Divine union—between the Eternal Three—was the foundation of the Mediatorial union. Had there been only one Person in the Divine Essence or Godhead, our salvation had been utterly impossible: we could not be joined to the very nature or essence of God, without either ungodding Him or deifying us. For the elect to have been taken into immediate union with God would produce a change in the Divine nature—an addition to it—something which can never be. Even the Man Christ Jesus could not be taken into immediate union with the Divine Essence absolutely considered, though He could and was with One in that Essence.

We are conscious of the fact that we have just stepped into deep water, and perhaps those who are accustomed to paddle in the shallows will be unwilling to follow; but for the sake of the few

who desire, by grace, to believe, and as far as God now permits, to understand the *mysteries* of our faith, we deemed it expedient to touch briefly upon this profound depth—not in a spirit of unholy boldness, but in fear and trembling. As it was impossible that the Divine nature should suffer and die, so it was for us to be joined thereto. But we could become one with a Divine *Person* who Himself subsisted *in* the Divine Essence, and Omniscience found a way whereby that should be effected. By virtue of the Son’s assuming our humanity the elect have been taken into union with a Divine Person, yet not into union with the Divine nature or Essence itself. Thus we have sought to point out an error against which we need to carefully guard, lest we entertain thoughts grossly dishonouring to the Godhead.

The highest union of all is that incomprehensible and yet ineffable union which exists between the three Divine Persons in the one Divine Essence. The next great union—founded, as we have briefly intimated above, upon that essential one—is the union of our nature unto the second Person in Jehovah, so that the Word made flesh is both God and man in the Person of Jesus Christ. This too is a profound and unfathomable mystery, yet is it revealed as a cardinal article of our faith. It is a subject of pure revelation, and only from the sacred Scriptures can we obtain any light thereon. It falls not within our province to *explain* this mystery, yet it is our privilege and duty to spare no pains in prayerfully seeking sound and clear views of the same, for there can be no true growing in grace except as we grow in the scriptural and Spirit-imparted knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Right thoughts of Him are to be esteemed far above all silver and gold.

Rightly did the Puritan John Flavel say of this subject, “We walk upon the brink of danger; the least tread awry may engulf us in the bogs of error.” There are certain vital postulates which are necessary to the scriptural setting forth of “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9), if the truth about His wondrous and glorious Person is to be maintained; such as the following. First, that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly God, possessing the Divine nature and all its essential attributes. Second, that He is also true Man, possessing human nature in all its essential properties and sinless infirmities. Third, that those two diverse natures are united in His unique Person, yet

ever remain distinct and unmixed, so that the Divine is not humanized, nor the human deified. Fourth, that both of those natures were and are operative in all of His mediatorial acts, so that while they may be distinguished, they cannot be separated. These great verities must be held firmly by us if we are to believe in and worship *the Christ of God*.

“The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man’s nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures—the Godhead and the manhood—were inseparably joined together in one Person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which Person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man” (Westminster Catechism). This is a clear and helpful setting forth of the constitution of Christ’s theanthropic Person, i.e., His Person as the God-man.

Let it not be supposed that because this is one of the deep mysteries of Christianity, it is a subject in which only theologians are interested, or that it is a matter upon which Christians may lawfully differ. Not so: it is a vital truth which is to be held fast at all costs, a precious truth revealed for the nourishing of faith. Only as the Holy Spirit enables us to receive into our minds and hearts the revelation which the Father has so graciously made of His Son shall we be effectually preserved from the subtle errors of Satan. The value of *what* Christ did depended entirely upon *who* He was, and therefore it is of the very first importance we should attain unto right views of the constitution of His wondrous Person. If the angels “desire to look into” these things (1 Peter 1:12)—figured by the cherubim with their faces turned toward the mercy-seat on the Ark (Exod. 25)—how much more should we who are chiefly concerned therein.

The “doctrine of Christ” or the truth concerning the constitution of His Person is of such fundamental and vital concern that without the belief of it no man can be a Christian: “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God” (1 John

4:2), that is, born of God, one of His people, and on the side of His truth. On the other hand, “every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God” (1 John 4:3). As John Newton well put it,

***“What think ye of Christ? is the test  
To try both your state and your scheme,  
You cannot be right in the rest,  
Unless you think rightly of Him.”***

But the great majority of people have no desire to meditate upon *Him*, wishing rather to banish all thoughts of Him from their minds, and even among those who sing “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,” few are willing to read *and re-read* the deeper things about His Person.

That which determines our *interest* in a person is our *love* for him. I am not much concerned about the ancestry and history of one who is a stranger to me, but when it comes to a person who is an object of my affections, then the smallest details about him are welcomed by me. A letter filled with little items about the person and doings of her absent son would be dearly treasured by his fond mother, but would be pointless and wearisome to one not acquainted with him. Does not the same principle hold good regarding the blessed Person of our Lord and Saviour? One who is, experimentally, a stranger to Him, cannot be expected to relish a setting forth of the mysterious constitution of His Person, but those who, by grace, esteem Him as the Fairest among ten thousand to their souls, are ready to read, meditate upon, and study, if thereby they may be favoured with clearer and fuller views *of Him*.

Surely this is a subject of thrilling interest, for it is one in which the infinite wisdom of God is most gloriously exhibited. “To unite finite and infinite, almightiness and weakness, immortality and mortality, immutability with a thing subject to change; to have a nature from eternity and yet a nature subject to the revolutions of time; a nature to make a law, and a nature to be subjected to the law; to be God blessed forever in the bosom of His Father, and an infant exposed to calamities from the womb of His mother: terms seeming most distant from union, most incapable of conjunction, to shake hands together, to be most intimately conjoined; glory and

vileness, fullness and emptiness, Heaven and earth; He that made all things, in one Person with a nature that is made; Immanuel, God and man in one; that which is most spiritual to partake of that which is carnal flesh and blood; one with the Father in His Godhead, one with us in His manhood; the Godhead to be in Him in the fullest perfection, and the manhood in the greatest purity; the creature one with the Creator, and the Creator one with the creature. Thus is the incomprehensible wisdom of God declared in the Word being made flesh.

“The terms of this union were infinitely distant. What greater distance can there be than between the Deity and humanity, between the Creator and the creature? Can you imagine the distance between eternity and time, infinite power and miserable infirmity, and immortal Spirit and dying flesh, the highest being and nothing? Yet these are espoused. A God of unmixed blessedness is linked personally with a man of perpetual sorrows; life incapable to die joined to a body in that economy incapable to live without dying first; infinite purity and a reputed sinner, eternal blessedness with a cursed nature, omniscience and ignorance; that which is entirely independent and that which is totally dependent, met together in a personal union, the eternal Son, the seed of Abraham (Heb. 2:16). What more miraculous than for God to become man, and man to become God! That a Person possessed of all the perfections of the Godhead should inherit all the imperfections of the manhood in one Person, sin only excepted; a holiness incapable of sinning to be made sin. Was there not need of an infinite power to bring together terms so far asunder, to elevate the humanity to be capable of, and disposed for, a conjunction with the Deity?” (S. Charnock).

The regulation of our thoughts about Him who is Divinely denominated “Wonderful,” is what every believer should pray and earnestly aim at. It is of deepest importance that we should have scriptural views concerning Him, not only in general, but in detail; not only that we may be fortified against pernicious errors touching His Person, which are now so rife, but also that we may be enabled to appreciate those particular instances in which the Divine wisdom shines forth with greatest splendour. This it is which will give Christ the “pre-eminence” in our minds, revealing how high above the relation and union which exists between Christians and God, is

the relation and union between Christ Himself and God. Yes, nothing short of this should be our aim and quest “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

Before seeking to contemplate, separately, the various aspects of and elements in the great mystery of “God manifest in flesh,” we will devote the next few paragraphs unto a consideration of some of the reasons *why* it was needful for the Son of God to become the Son of man. The union of two distinct natures in the Person of the Lord Jesus was a fundamental requisite for the union of sinners to God in Christ. We were once with God in Adam, but when he fell, a breach was made: as it is written, “They are all *gone out of the way*” (Rom. 3:12), which clearly implies that they were once found in “the way.” That breach being made, we cannot be restored unto God, unless and until He came to us. A Divine Person must take our nature in order to reconcile our persons to God, and therefore do we read of Christ that He “once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might *bring us to God*” (1 Peter 3:18). But let us enter a little into detail, even though the ground here be familiar to most of our readers.

First, it was requisite that one of the Divine Persons should be made under that very law which was originally given to man, and which man transgressed. “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal 4:4). Observe the order: He was “made of a woman” in order to be “made under the law.” He who was “in the form of God” took upon Him “the form of a servant,” that is, entered the place of subjection. He came to repair our lost condition, and in order thereto it was needful that He submit Himself unto the Divine precepts, that by His obedience He might recover what by their disobedience His people had lost. And by the perfect obedience of this august Person, the law was more “magnified” than it had been insulted by our rebellion.

Second, it was requisite that He who would save His people from their sins should suffer the penalty of that law which they had broken. There was an awful curse pronounced upon those who broke the law, and the Saviour must take His people’s place and

undergo it: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us*” (Gal. 3:13). That curse was death, but how could God the Son die? Only by assuming a mortal nature. Third, it was requisite that in delivering Satan’s captives the great Enemy should be conquered by One in the same nature as had been defeated by him. Accordingly it is written, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

Fourth, it was requisite that the Redeemer should take possession of Heaven for us in our nature, and therefore did He say, “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). Blessed indeed is that word in Hebrews 6, “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that *within the veil*; whither the forerunner is *for us entered*, even Jesus” (verses 18-20). Fifth, it was requisite that the mighty Redeemer should also be capable, experimentally, of having compassion on the infirmities of His people, and how could this be had He never encountered them in His own person? “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

Not only was it necessary for God the Son to assume a *human* nature, but also that His humanity should be derived from *the common root* of our first parents. It would not suitably have answered the Divine purpose that Christ’s humanity should be created immediately out of nothing, because there had then been no such alliance between Him and us as to lay a foundation of hope of salvation by His undertaking. No, it was essential that He should sustain the character and perform the work of a *redeemer*, that He should be our Goal or *near Kinsman*, for to Him alone belonged the *right* of redemption: see Leviticus 25:48, 49; Ruth 2:20 and 3:9, margin. So it was declared at the beginning: He was to be *the woman’s* “Seed” (Gen. 3:15), and thus become our Kinsman. “For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of one* (i.e., one stock): for which cause He is not ashamed to call them



brethren” (Heb. 2:11).

Yet, it was also absolutely necessary, notwithstanding, that the nature in which redemption was to be performed should not only be derived from its original root, but also by *such derivation* that it should not be tainted by sin or partake in any degree of that moral defilement in which every child of Adam is conceived and born. It was requisite that our High Priest should be “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” “If the human nature of Christ had partook, in any measure, of that pollution which, since the Fall, is hereditary to us, it would have been destitute of the holy image of God, as we are prior to regeneration: and, consequently, He would have been rendered incapable of making the least atonement for us. He who is himself sinful, cannot satisfy Divine justice on the behalf of another; because, by one offence, he forfeits his own soul. Here, then, the adorable wisdom of God appears in its richest glory. For though it was necessary our Surety should be man, and the seed of the woman, yet He was conceived in such a manner as to be entirely without sin” (A. Booth).

God brought a clean thing out of an unclean. The manhood of Christ was derived from the common stock of our humanity, yet was it neither begotten nor conceived by carnal concupiscence. Original sin is propagated by ordinary generation, but the Son of man was produced by extraordinary generation. It is by the father’s act that a child is begotten in the image and likeness of our first fallen and corrupted father. But though a real Man, Christ was not begotten by a man. His humanity was produced from the substance of Mary by an extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit above nature, and hence His miraculous and immaculate conception is far above the compass of human reason to either understand or express. Through the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit, the humanity of Christ was conceived by a virgin who had never known a man. It was an act of Omnipotence to produce it; it was an act of Divine holiness to sanctify it; it was an act of Omniscience to unite it unto the Person of the eternal Son of God.

We shall now endeavour to consider *the nature of* the Divine incarnation itself—exactly what took place when the Word became flesh. Here it behooves us to tread with the utmost reverence and caution, for the ground is truly holy. Only by adhering closely to the

Scriptures themselves can we hope to be preserved from error; only as the Holy Spirit Himself is pleased to be our Guide may we expect to be led into the truth thereof; and only as we attend diligently to every jot and tittle in the revelation which God has graciously vouchsafed, will it be possible to obtain anything approaching a complete view of the same. May the Lord enable us to gird up the loins of our mind, and grant that in His light we may see light, as we approach our happy but difficult task?

In Old Testament times God granted various intimations that the coming Deliverer should be both Divine and human. At the beginning God announced to the Serpent (not “promised” unto Adam, be it noted), “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel” (Gen. 3:15). This was a clear indication that the Saviour should be human, for He would be the woman’s “Seed;” yet it as definitely intimated that the Saviour would be more than a man, for it is the work of Omnipotence to destroy Satan’s power, hence we read, “The *God* of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20). Expressly was it revealed that “a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14), “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God” etc., (Isa. 9:6). In the ancient “Theophanies” such as in Genesis 18:1, 2; 32:24; Joshua 5:13, 14, etc., the Divine incarnation was anticipated and adumbrated, for in each case the “man” was obviously the Lord Himself in temporary human form.

Now there were three distinct things which belonged to the Word’s becoming flesh: the actual production of His humanity, the sanctifying thereof, and His personal assumption of it. The production of it was by miraculous conception, whereby His human nature was under the supernatural operation of God the Spirit framed of the substance of Mary, without man’s help: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). But let it here be pointed out that in no sense was the Spirit the “father” of Jesus, for He contributed no matter to the making of His manhood, but

only miraculously fashioned it out of the seed of His virgin mother. “Although the human nature of Christ was individualized and personalized by a miraculous conception, and not by ordinary generation, yet there was as really and truly a conception and birth as if it had been by ordinary generation. Jesus Christ was really and truly the Son of Mary. He was bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh. He was of her substance and blood. He was consubstantial with her; in as full a sense as an ordinary child is consubstantial with an ordinary mother” (W. Shedd, 1889).

That which was conceived by Mary, under the mighty power of the Holy Spirit was *not* a human *person*, but a human *nature*; hence was it said “that holy *thing* which shall be born” (Luke 1:35). It is most important to clearly grasp this fact if we are to be preserved from error. When contemplating the ineffable mystery of the Holy Trinity, we saw how necessary it was to distinguish sharply between *nature* and *person*, for while there are three Persons in the Godhead, Their essence or nature is but one. In like manner, it is equally essential that we observe the same distinction when viewing the Person of the Mediator, for though He assumed human nature, He did not take a human person into union with Himself. Thus, we may correctly refer to the *complex person* of Christ, but we must not speak of His *dual personality*.

At the first moment of our Lord’s assumption of human nature, that human nature existed only as the “seed” or *un*-individualized substance of the Virgin. But it was not for that reason an *incomplete* humanity, for all the essential *properties* of humanity are in the human nature itself. Christ assumed the human nature *before* it had become a particular person by conception in the womb: He “took on Him the *seed* of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16). The personalizing of His humanity was by its miraculous union with His Deity, though that added no new properties to human nature, but gave it a new and unique *form*. Nor was it simply a material body He assumed, but a human spirit and soul and body; for He was made “in all things like unto His brethren, sin excepted.”

That it was an *impersonal* human nature which the Son of God assumed is clear from His own words in Hebrews 10:5: “A body hast Thou prepared *Me*.” The “body,” put metonymically for the entire human nature was *not* the “Me” or “Person,” but something

which He took unto Himself. “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead” (2 Cor. 5:14): note carefully it is *one* who died: though possessing two natures, there was but a single Person. The humanity of Christ—consisting of spirit, and soul and body—had no subsistence in itself or by itself, but only as it was taken into union with a Divine Person. In answering the question, “What was the cause that the Person of the Son of God *did not* join Himself to a perfect *person* of man,” the renowned James Usher (1654) replied, “1. Because then there could not be a personal union of both to make *one* perfect Mediator. 2. Then there should be four Persons in the Trinity. 3. The works of each of the natures could not be counted the works of a whole Person.”

“The *personality* of Jesus Christ is in His Divine nature, and not in His human. Jesus Christ existed a distinct, Divine Person from eternity, the second Person in the adorable Trinity. The human nature which this Divine Person, the Word, assumed into a personal union with Himself, is not and never was a distinct person by itself, and personality cannot be ascribed to it, and does not belong to it any otherwise than as united to the Logos” (S. Hopkins, 1795). As a woman has no *wifely* personality until she is married, so the humanity of Christ had no personality till it was united to Himself: “that holy thing which shall be born of thee (Mary) shall be called *the Son of God*” (Luke 1:35)—receiving its name from the Divine Person with which it was made one. Just as my personality and your personality, from first to last, centres in our *highest* part—the soul—and is only shared in by the body, so the personality of the Mediator centres in His highest part—His Deity—His humanity only sharing in it.

The second thing pertaining to the Mediatorial union was the *sanctifying* of that “seed” which was miraculously conceived in the womb of the Virgin. To sanctify signifies to set apart unto God. For that two things are required: the cleansing of the object or person from pollution, and the enduing it with excellency fit for the Divine service—typified under the ceremonial economy by the washing and then the anointing of the priests, and the sacred vessels. In connection with the humanity of our Lord, the first was secured by God’s miraculously preserving it from the slightest taint of

defilement, so that the Lamb was “without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). Nothing with the least trace of corruption in it could be joined to the immaculate Son of God. Original sin could not be transmitted to Him, because He was never in Adam nor begotten by a man. The immediate interposition of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) prevented all possibility of any corruption being transmitted through Mary.

The ending of Christ’s humanity was also by the gracious operation of the Spirit: see Isaiah 11:1, 2. “God, in the human nature of Christ, did perfectly renew that blessed image of His on our nature, which we lost in Adam; with an addition of many glorious endowments which Adam was not made partaker of. God did not renew it in His nature, as though that portion of it whereof He was partaker, had ever been destitute or deprived of it, as it is with the same nature in all other persons. For He derived not His nature from Adam in the same way that we do; nor was He ever in Adam as the public representative of our nature as we were. But our nature in Him had the image of God implanted in it, which was lost and separated from the same nature, in all other instances of its subsistence. It pleased the Father that in Him *all fullness* should dwell, that He should be ‘full of grace and truth,’ and in all things have the pre-eminence.

“The great design of God in His grace is, that as we have borne the ‘image of the first Adam’ in the depravation of our natures, so we should bear ‘the image of the second’ in their renovation. As we have borne ‘the image of the earthy,’ so we shall bear ‘the image of the heavenly’ (1 Cor. 15:49). And as He is the pattern of all our graces, so He is of glory also. All our glory will consist in our being ‘made like unto Him,’ which what it is doth not yet appear (1 John 3:2). For He shall ‘change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body’ (Phil. 3:21). Wherefore the fullness of grace was bestowed upon the human nature of Christ, and the image of God gloriously implanted thereon, that it might be the prototype and example of what the church was through Him to be made partaker of” (John Owen).

The Holy Spirit infused into our Saviour’s humanity *every* spiritual grace in its fullness and perfection. Each child of God is lovely in His sight because of some spiritual excellence which has

been imparted to him—in one it is faith, in another courage, in another meekness; but the humanity of Christ was “*altogether lovely*.” This was foreshadowed of old in the meal offering (Lev. 2): not only was the fine flour “unleavened” (verse 5), but the fragrant “frankincense” was put thereon as a “sweet savour to the LORD” (verse 2). Christ was more holy in His human nature than was Adam when he was first created, and than are the unfallen and pure angels in Heaven, for it received the Spirit “without measure” (John 3:34), and because it was taken into personal union with the Son of the Living God. “His body and mind were the essence of purity. His heart was filled with the love of God, His thoughts were all regularly acted on what was before Him, His will was perfectly sanctified to perform the whole will of God. His affections were most correctly poised and properly fixed on God” (S.E. Pierce).

The third thing pertaining to the Mediatorial union was *the actual assumption* of that human nature which the Holy Spirit framed in the womb of the Virgin, and which He endowed with a fullness of grace and truth, whereby the eternal Son took the same upon Him, that it might have a proper and personal subsistence. A remarkable adumbration of this mystery seems to have been made in the natural world for the purpose of aiding our feeble understandings. This was set forth by one of the earlier Puritans thus: “As the plant called mistletoe *has no root of its own*, but grows and lives in the stock or body of the oak or some other tree, so the human nature having no personal subsistence, is, as it were, ingrafted into the Person of the Son, and is wholly supported and sustained by it, so as it should not be at all, if it were not sustained in that manner” (W. Perkins, 1595).

We believe this act of assumption took place at the very first moment of conception in the Virgin’s womb: certainly it was months before the birth, as is clear from Luke 1:43, where Elizabeth, “filled with the Holy Ghost” (verse 41), exclaimed “And whence is this to me, that the mother of my *Lord* should come to me?” This assumption was purely a *voluntary* act on the part of the Son of God: He did not assume human nature from any necessity, but freely; not out of indigence, but bounty; not that *He* might be perfected thereby, but to perfect *it*. It was also a *permanent* act, so that from the first moment of His assumption of our humanity, there

never was, nor to all eternity shall there be, any separation between His two natures. Therein the hypostatic union differs from the conjunction between the soul and body in us: at death this conjunction is severed in us; but when Christ died, His body and soul were still united to His Divine Person as much as ever.

As to *how* this act of assumption took place, we cannot say. The Scriptures themselves draw a veil over this mystery: “the power of the Highest shall *overshadow thee*” (Luke 1:35), so that from Mary and from us was hidden that ineffable work of the Most High, forbidding us to make any curious and unholy attempts to pry into it. The Divine transaction occurred, the amazing work was performed, and we are called upon to believe and adore. That unique act whereby the Maker of all things “took on Him the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16), when the Sovereign over angels “took upon Him the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7), was the foundation of the Divine relation between the Son of God and the man Christ Jesus. Concerning the blessedness, the marvel, the unfathomable depths, the transcendent wisdom and glory of the act of assumption, we cannot do better than quote again from that prince of theologians, John Owen:

“His conception in the womb of the Virgin, as unto the integrity of human nature, was a miraculous operation of the Divine power. But the prevention of that nature from any subsistence of its own, by its assumption into personal union with the Son of God, in the first instance of its conception, is that which is *above all miracles*, nor can be designed by that name. A *mystery* it is, so far above the order of all creating or providential operations, that it wholly transcends the sphere of them that are most miraculous. Herein did God glorify all the properties of the Divine nature, acting in a way of infinite wisdom, grace, and condescension? The depths of the mystery hereof are open only unto Him whose understanding is infinite, which no created understanding can comprehend.”

“All other things were produced and effected by an outward emanation of power from God: He said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. But this assumption of our nature into hypostatical union with the Son of God, the constitution of one and the same individual person in two natures so infinitely distinct, as those of God and man, whereby the eternal was made in time, the infinite

became finite, the immortal mortal, yet continuing eternal, infinite, immortal, is that singular expression of Divine wisdom, goodness, and power, wherein God will be admired and glorified unto all eternity. Herein was that change introduced into the whole first creation, whereby the blessed angels were exalted, Satan and his works ruined, mankind recovered from a dismal apostasy, all things made new, all things in heaven and earth reconciled and gathered into one Head, and a revenue of eternal glory raised unto God, incomparably above what the first constitution of all things in the order of nature could yield unto Him.”

“And the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14): not by His Deity being converted into matter, nor simply by His appearing in the outward semblance of man; but by actually assuming that “holy thing” which was framed by the Spirit and conceived by the Virgin. The Word “flesh” in John 1:14 includes more than a physical body—compare Romans 3:20 and 1 Corinthians 1:29 for the scope of this term. The eternal Word took upon Him a complete and perfect human nature, with all the faculties and members pertaining to such. “Choosing from the womb of the Virgin a temple for His residence, He who was the Son of God became also the Son of man: not by confusion of substance, but by a unity of person. For we assert such a connection and union of the Divine with the humanity, that each nature *retains* its properties entire, and yet both together constitute one Christ” (John Calvin, “Institutes”).

This union of the Divine and human natures in the Mediator is not a *consubstantial* one such as pertains to the three Persons in the Godhead, for They are united among Themselves in one Essence: They all have but one and the same nature and will; but in Christ there are two distinct natures and wills. Nor is the Mediatorial union like unto the *physical*, whereby a soul and body are united in one human being, for that constitution is dissolved by death; whereas the hypostatic union is indissoluble. Nor is the Mediatorial union analogous unto the *mystical*, such as exists between Christ and His Church, for though that be indeed a most glorious union, so that we are in Christ and He in us, yet we are not *one person* with Him; and thus the mystical union falls far below that ineffable and incomprehensible oneness which exists between the Son of God and the Son of man.



Thomas Goodwin, of blessed memory among lovers of deep expository works, was wont to call this Mediatorial union “the *middle* union,” coming in as it does between the union of the three Divine Persons in the Godhead, and the Church’s union with God in Christ. We may also perceive and admire the wisdom of the eternal Three in selecting the middle One to be the Mediator; as we may also discern and adore the propriety of choosing the *Son* to be the one who should enter the place of *obedience*. He who eternally subsisted between the Father and the Spirit, has, by virtue of His incarnation, entered the place of “Daysman” between God and men; for in consequence of His union with the Divine Essence, He is able to “take hold” of God on the one side, and in consequence of His union with our humanity, He is able to take hold of us on the other side; so that He “takes hold of both” as Job desired (9:33).

Christ is not now two persons combined together, but one Person having two natures. He is both God and man, as many Scriptures plainly affirm, possessing in Himself both Deity and humanity. “Unto us a child is born,” there is His humanity; “Unto us a Son is given: and His name shall be called The mighty God” (Isa. 9:6), there is His Deity. “That holy thing which shall be born of thee,” there is His humanity; “shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35), there is His Deity—“*called* the Son of God” means He shall be *owned* as such: “all shall so acknowledge Him: either here in gracious confession, or in glorious confusion hereafter” (Thomas Adams, 1660). “God sent forth his Son,” there is His Deity; “made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4), there is His humanity. “Made of the seed of David according to the flesh,” there is His humanity; “And declared to be the Son of God” (Rom. 1:3, 4), there is His Deity, both making up the one Person of “Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Having considered the needs-be for the Divine incarnation, having sought to contemplate the nature thereof, we now turn unto some of the *effects and consequences* of the same. We shall seek to examine, first, the effects of the Mediatorial union with respect unto the Divine nature of Christ; second, with respect unto His human nature; and third with respect unto His complex Person. When the eternal Word became flesh, His Divine nature underwent *no* change whatsoever. Such a thing could not be: God is no more subject to alteration or variation than He is to death. Being God the Son, the

Word was immutable, and must remain forever the same. To say that His Deity was humanized is to assert an utter impossibility. The incarnation of the Beloved of the Father, despoiled Him of none of His perfections. Had He lost (or “emptied” Himself of) any of those attributes proper to the Divine nature, He could not have been a sufficient Mediator. That is properly a “change,” when anything ceases to be what it was before; but such was not the case with Immanuel. It was none other than *God* who was “manifest in flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16), so that the incarnate Son could say, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

When it is affirmed “The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us,” the Spirit was careful to move John to at once add, “and we beheld His glory.” *What* “glory?” The “glory” of His meekness, gentleness, compassion? No, but “the glory as of the Only begotten of the Father.” Though He now became what He was not previously—united to manhood—yet He ceased not to be in Himself all that He was before. “He assumed our nature without laying aside His own. When the soul is united to the body, doth it lose any of those perfections that are proper to its nature? Is there any change either in the substance or qualities of it? No; but it makes a change in the body; and of a dull lump it makes a living mass, conveys vigour to it, and by its power quickens it to sense and motion. So did the Divine nature and human remain entire: there was no change of the one into the other, as Christ by a miracle changed water into wine, or men by art change sand or ashes into glass” (S. Charnock).

During the days of His humiliation, the Divine *glory* of the Mediator was partly veiled. There was no halo of Divine light encircling His head, to mark Him out as Immanuel. There was no visible retinue of angels in attendance upon Him, to signify the Lord of Heaven was tabernacling upon earth. Instead, He was born in a manger, grew up in the home of a peasant family, and when He began His public ministry His forerunner was clothed in a garment of camel’s hair and His ambassadors were humble fishermen. Yet even then His Divine glory was not completely eclipsed. The character He displayed was “Fairer than the children of men” (Psa. 45:2). His teaching was such that even the officers sent to arrest Him testified, “never man spake like this Man” (John 7:46). His

miracles witnessed to His Almightyness. Even in death He could not be hid: the centurion exclaiming, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matt. 27:54).

Yet the partial veiling of His Divine glory in nowise wrought any change in, still less did it injure the Divine nature itself, any more than the sun undergoes any change or is to the slightest degree injured when it is hid by the interposition of a cloud. “When He prays for the glory He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), He prays that a glory He had in His deity might shine forth in His Person as Mediator, and be evinced in that height and splendour suitable to His dignity, which had been so lately darkened by His abasement; that as He had appeared to be the Son of man in the infirmity of the flesh, He might appear to be the Son of God in the glory of His Person, that He might appear to be the Son of God and the Son of man in one Person” (S. Charnock). At His ascension, nothing was added to His essential Person: His Divine glory did but shine forth more distinctly when He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

We turn next to consider the consequence of His human nature being taken into union with the Son of God. And, first, negatively. His humanity was not invested with Divine attributes. As the Divine nature was not humanized at the incarnation, neither was the humanity deified: there was no communication of properties from one to the other; both preserved their integrity, and remained in possession of their distinctive qualities. “I do not hereby ascribe the infusion of omniscience, of infinite understanding, wisdom, and knowledge into the human nature of Christ. It was and is a creature, finite and limited, nor is a capable subject of properties absolutely infinite and immense. Filled it was with light and wisdom 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. The Spirit of the Lord did rest upon Him: Isaiah 11:1-3” (John Owen).

There were three respects in which the humanity of Christ underwent no change by virtue of its union with His Divine Person. First, with respect to its *essence*: intrinsically and integrally it was and forever remains a real and true humanity. Second, in respect to its *properties*: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in

favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52); when He prayed “not My will, but Thine, be done” (Luke 22:42), it was the subjecting of the human unto the Divine. Third, with respect to its *operations*: every human faculty was normally exercised by “the man Christ Jesus.” He hungered and thirsted, ate and drank; He wearied and slept; He sorrowed and wept; He suffered and died. Some things as a man He knew not (Mark 13:32), except as they were *given* Him by revelation (Rev. 1:1).

Positively, the humanity was elevated unto a state infinitely surpassing that of every other creature in earth and Heaven. Though the Godhead received nothing from the manhood, yet the manhood itself—taken into union with the second Person in the Trinity—was immeasurably enriched and exalted to unspeakable dignity, infinitely above that of the angels. He who is Head of the Church has, in all things, “the pre-eminence.” Not only was the Divine *wisdom* more illustriously displayed in the wondrous constitution of the Mediator than in any or all the other works of God, but His *grace* was also more gloriously evidenced unto the man Christ Jesus than it was in the saving of sinners. The highest act of Divine favour was exercised when the woman’s “Seed” was raised high above all other creatures, and made Jehovah’s “Fellow.” Wherein could the Seed of Abraham merit such an inestimable honour! It was *grace*, pure and simple, grace in its most superlative exercise, which conferred upon the humanity of Christ a dignity and glory immeasurably exceeding that possessed by the cherubim and seraphim.

The Man Christ Jesus was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20) unto union with the second Person in the Godhead, and therefore the Divine grace shown unto Him in *His* predestination was greater far than that shown unto *us*, by how much more the privileges ordained were greater. Marvellous grace indeed is it that we should be elevated unto a place in the family of God and “made nigh” (Eph. 2:13) unto Him; but that falls far, far short of the Man Christ Jesus being actually united to the immediate Person of the Son of God; and in consequence thereof being not only “the *Firstborn* (Chief) of every creature,” but “the Man that is *My Fellow*, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 13:7)—advanced unto a fellowship in the Society of the blessed Trinity. This it was which

stamped an infinite worth upon the whole work of the Mediator.

“Behold My servant, whom I uphold; *Mine Elect*, in whom My soul delighteth” (Isa. 42:1). God’s “Elect” was the Man whom He eternally chose to taken into personal union with His co-essential and co-equal Son. This is the One in whom He eternally delighted, ever viewing Him in the glass of His decrees. This is “the Man of His right hand, the Son of man whom He madest strong *for Himself*” (Psa. 80:17). This was indeed grace worthy of God, such as can never be fully conceived by any finite intelligence, no not by the saints in Heaven through the ages of eternity. In the Person of the God-man, grace, sovereign grace, was exercised in its first and greatest act, shining forth in its utmost splendour and discovered in its utmost freeness. For again we say, there could be nothing whatever in the unindividualized “seed” of the woman which could be, to the smallest degree, entitled unto such supernal glory.

It was therefore meet and requisite that grace and glory should be communicated and bestowed upon the humanity of Christ, proportionately to the high dignity of its being taken into union with the Son. “1. Pre-eminence, to all other individuals of human nature: the humanity of Christ was chosen and preferred to the grace of union with the Son of God, above them all; it has a better subsistence than they had, and has obtained a more excellent name than they, and is possessed of blessings and privileges above all creatures. All which is not of any merit in it, but of the free grace of God. 2. Perfect holiness and impeccability: it is called *that holy Thing*: it is eminently and perfectly so, without original sin, or any actual transgression; it is not conscious of any sin, never committed any, nor is it possible it should. 3. A communication of habitual grace to it in the greatest degree; it is, in this respect, fairer and more beautiful than any of the sons of men: grace being poured into it in great plenty; it is anointed with the oil of gladness above its fellows; that is, with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit” (John Gill, 1770).

Consider, briefly, some of the super-excellent perfections of the Man Christ Jesus. There is a *wisdom* in Him which is far above what all other creatures have attained or can reach unto, so that in Him “Are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). It is true those treasures of wisdom are not of that richness and

extent as the wisdom that dwells in God Himself, for the manhood of Christ is not omniscient; yet by virtue of its union with the Son of God, it has been taken into all the counsels of the Godhead, and knows all decrees concerning the past, the present, and the future.

The same holds good of His *power*. Though the manhood of Christ has not been endowed with omnipotence, yet it approximates as closely thereto, as any creature could, for all power has been given to Him, both in Heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18), so that the rule of the universe is committed to Him, He upholding all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). God “hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of *man*” (John 5:27).

The image of God shines brightly in Christ’s *independency* and *sovereignty*. This incommunicable attribute of Deity is reflected to a high degree in Him who has been made “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36), being one of the brightest jewels in the crown of His glorified humanity. This personal prerogative of the Son of God is now shared in by the nature which He took into union with Himself, as the queen shares the palace of the king. A dependent “thing” has been made an independent creature—what a marvel of marvels!

So too of His *holiness*. There is that transcendency of holiness in the Man Christ Jesus that is not found in all other creatures put together, and in this respect also He is “the Image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). There is in Him a holiness over and above that grace communicated to Him “without measure” by the Spirit: it is a relative holiness of a man united to the second Person of the Godhead, which casts the shine of its superlative glory upon that which is habitual or communicated. It is *this* which gave infinite value to all He did.

Coming now to the consequences of the Divine incarnation as it respects *the complex Person* of the Mediator. First, there is a communion between the two natures in Him which is far more intimate than that enjoyed by husband and wife, or even that which obtains between Christ and His Church: it is exceeded only by that ineffable fellowship which exists among the eternal Three. While the properties of each several nature preserve their distinctness, yet they are so united to form one Person, who may be denominated according to either nature. Sometimes the Mediator is called “man”

as in Acts 17:31, etc., and at others He is designated “God,” as in Romans 9:5, etc. Thus, what cannot be said of Christ in the abstract, can be predicated of Him in the concrete—His Deity could not be tempted, nor is His humanity omnipresent: yet as a *Person* He was tempted and is omnipresent.

Second, in consequence of the two natures in His Person, Christ holds the office of Mediator. “But He is not Mediator only in His human nature, and only exercises it in that; He took upon Him, and was invested with this *office* before His assumption of human nature; and could and did exercise some parts of it without it; but there were others that required His human nature; and when, and not before it was requisite, He assumed it; and in it, as united to His Divine Person, He is God-man, is Prophet, Priest, King, Judge, Lawgiver, and Saviour; and has power over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him” (John Gill). This it is which stamped infinite worth, dignity and glory on what He did. He being both God and man in one Person, His love was the love of God (1 John 3:16), His righteousness was the righteousness of God (Phil. 3:9), His blood was the blood of God (Acts 20:28).

Thirdly, there is a communion *of operations* in both natures to the discharge of His Mediatorial office. The work performed by Christ was the work of the God-man: there was a concurrence of both natures in the performance of it. “In the work of atonement, as well as in all the other parts of His mediatorial activity, Christ acted according to both natures. They ever acted conjointly, but in their several spheres. It is important to keep in mind that they never acted apart in anything that concerned the mediatorial function. And this it is the more necessary to mention, because the notion has obtained currency in modern times that the Divine nature was for the most part in abeyance during His humiliation” (George Smeaton, 1868). “The perfect complete work of Christ in every act of His mediatory office, in all that He did as the King, Priest, and Prophet of the Church, in all that He continueth to do for us, in or by virtue of whether nature soever it be done, is not to be considered as the act of this or that nature in Him alone, but it is the act and work of *the whole person*” (John Owen).

Fourth, though the human nature of Christ, distinctively considered, is not a formal object of worship, since it is a creature,

yet as taken into union with God the Son, and both natures together forming the one Person of the Mediator, Christ is to be adored and worshipped. Thus, at His birth it was said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb. 1:6). So at His ascension He was given a name which is above every name, "that at the name of *Jesus* every knee should bow" (Phil. 2:9, 10), that is, in a way of religious adoration. Accordingly we read "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, *and unto the Lamb* for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13).

Fifth, in consequence of the hypostatic union, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells personally in Jesus Christ, and in Him there is such an outshining of the perfections of Jehovah as contain the utmost manifestation of Deity which can be made either unto the angels or unto men. The "glory of God" shines "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Much may be seen of God, in creation, in providence, in grace, but in and by *Jesus Christ alone* is He fully and perfectly revealed. Therefore could He say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

The particular points which most need to be guarded in connection with this mysterious and glorious subject are: 1. The eternal Son of God united to Himself human nature. 2. Every particular man is a separate person, because he subsists of himself; but the manhood of Christ never subsisted of itself, but only in union with the second Person of the Godhead. 3. Christ, the Mediator, is but one Person; God and man being perfectly united in Him. 4. The two natures remain distinct in Him, preserving their own properties and characteristics. 5. Christ's human nature was *not* created in Heaven (as the early Plymouth Brethren taught): "The Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:47) refers to His *Divine Person*, and not to the descent of His humanity. If Christ's humanity had not been formed out of Mary's substance, it had belonged to another class of creatures, and Christ had not been "the Son of man" and so could not have been our Kinsman-Redeemer. 6. The humanity of Christ was not begotten by generation according to the ordinary course of nature, but was produced by the extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit, and therefore it is high above the compass of



human reason to understand or explain. 7. As man, Christ is neither “the Son of God” (Luke 1:35) by nature or by adoption, but only *by personal union*—as the wife receives the name of her husband. 8. The humanity of Christ had to be united to His Divine Person, in order that His work should possess infinite merits. 9. Each nature acts separately, yet in conjunction with the other: as man Christ “laid down” His life, as God He “took it again” (John 10:18). 10. A *whole* Christ, God and man, is the Object of our faith, is our Saviour and Lord, and is to be worshipped and served as such.

In conclusion, let us marvel at, admire and adore this transcendent wonder and mystery. First, that a *human* nature was produced without the instrumentality of any man. Second, that that human nature was produced out of a woman without contracting the slightest taint of sin. Third, that it had no separate personality subsisting by itself. Fourth, that it should be, nevertheless, “the Son of man.” Fifth, that a Divine Person should unite unto Himself such a frail and lowly nature. Sixth, that that Divine Person was in nowise injured by such an union. Seventh, that each nature should continue to preserve its own separate properties and functions.

The second of seven booklets.

