

The Error of Denying That the Infinite God Became a Finite Man through Incarnation

In a June 2008 letter that Norman Geisler claims¹ to have sent to Ron Kangas seeking clarification² concerning points in Kangas's article "The Economy of God: The Triune God in His Operation"³ (hereafter, "Economy"), Geisler denied that the infinite God became a finite man through incarnation, a point that "Economy" resolutely affirmed. Geisler wrote:

Fourth, what do you mean by "twofoldness"^[4] of truth. Can logical opposites both be true? You seem to say that Christ was both divine and human in one nature. For example, you affirm he is both "infinite God and a finite man." You say that "God is infinite, and man is finite, yet in Christ the two became one." This is not the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity which never affirms that God (the infinite) became man (the finite). Rather, it asserts that the second person of the Godhead became man. Certainly, the Father and the Spirit did not become human. Only the Son became human. That is, he (who was the second person of the Godhead from all eternity) assumed another distinctly different nature and thus was both God and man united in one person (but not in one nature).

Geisler's analysis contains several serious errors:

1. Ron Kangas does not imply (nor did he write) that "Christ was both divine and human in one nature," as Geisler alleges. Geisler's claim disregards Ron Kangas's clearly defined use of the word *mingling* to describe the relationship between the two natures, the divine and the human, in the one Person, the incarnate Christ.
2. Geisler's assertion that "the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity ... never affirms that God (the infinite) became man (the finite)" suggests that Christ is not the infinite God.
3. When Ron Kangas writes that "God is infinite, and man is finite, yet in Christ the two became one," Geisler interprets the statement with a definition of "became" that neither Ron Kangas nor the Bible intends.
4. Geisler forbids any involvement of the Father and the Spirit in the incarnation of Christ and teaches, based on a law of logical non-contradiction, a Trinity in which the three Persons are not only distinct but also separate.

Further, statements on the incarnation of Christ from Geisler's *Systematic Theology* contradict his arguments to Ron Kangas, thus calling into question whether or not he is clear or consistent about what he believes and teaches.

Geisler Misrepresents the Words of Ron Kangas and Disregards His Definition of "Mingling"

Geisler creates a "straw man"⁵ by misrepresenting Ron Kangas's assertion that the infinite God became a finite man. Geisler states, "You seem to say that Christ was both divine and human in one nature," yet nowhere in "Economy" did Ron Kangas state, or even imply, that Christ has only one nature. On the contrary, he refers to Christ as a "unique divine-human *person*, [who is] both the infinite God and a finite man" (6, emphasis added), not to an alleged divine-human

nature. Further, he states, “Through incarnation our God, the Creator, the eternal One, became mingled with man, a God-man who had human blood to shed for redemption and who was able to die for us” (8), and he defines *mingling* as follows: “the oneness of mingling is a matter of two natures—divinity and humanity—being mingled together without the producing of a third nature” (12).⁶ As should be clear to any reader familiar with historical theology, Ron Kangas included the qualifier “without the producing of a third nature” to make clear that he is not teaching monophysitism, an ancient heresy that obliterated the distinction between the two natures in Christ. Despite this clear statement by Ron Kangas in his article, Geisler wrote:

Sixth, how would you distinguish your view from the heresy called monophysitism which co-mingled the two natures of Christ? How can he be both finite and not-finite (in-finite) at the same time in the same sense?

A fair reading of “Economy” makes clear that Ron Kangas affirms Christ’s two natures, the divine and the human.

Critics have wrongly assumed that we in the local churches use *mingling* to teach that the two natures in Christ are so united that they lose their respective distinctions and that a third nature, neither divine nor human,⁷ results from the combination. However, in our use of the word *mingling*, which is the use employed by Ron Kangas, we understand that the two natures in Christ do not lose their respective distinctions; rather, as the formula of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) affirms, the two natures in Christ exist “inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably.” It is, therefore, perfectly permissible to state, as Ron Kangas has, that the infinite God and the finite man became one because Christ is the infinite God in His divine nature and a finite man in His human nature, the two natures remaining distinct in the one Person of the God-man, Jesus Christ. No teacher of orthodox Christian theology would contest this. Sadly, Geisler has misrepresented Ron Kangas’s careful articulation of this precious and fundamental truth.

Geisler’s twisting of Ron Kangas’s words is particularly egregious. Even if Geisler was influenced by old misunderstandings concerning our use of the word *mingling*, he still should not be excused from promulgating a false charge that has been repudiated repeatedly in various media.⁸ In short, he should have done his research. It is not too much to expect that he understand what we teach before he critiques it and to adhere to his own stated principle that “it is not possible to evaluate another viewpoint fairly without first understanding it.”⁹ At a minimum, we should be able to recognize our own teaching in any representation of it, but Geisler has so thoroughly distorted our teaching that we are unable to detect even a trace of it in his alleged representation.

Geisler Suggests that Christ Is Not the Infinite God

Geisler resolutely states that it was not the infinite God but only the second Person of the Trinity who became man, as his letter to Ron Kangas demonstrates:

...the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity ... never affirms that God (the infinite) became man (the finite). Rather, it asserts that the second person of the Godhead became man.

In making this careless and unsettling assertion, Geisler has made another significant misstep. Here it seems that Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, is something other than God the Infinite because, in Geisler's estimation, it was not the infinite God but only the second Person of the Trinity who became a man. But here is a strange contradiction. In his *Systematic Theology* he affirms that Christ was infinite in His divine nature:

Christ has two natures, and they must not be confused—what is true of one is not necessarily true of the other. For example, Christ was infinite and uncreated in His divine nature, but He was finite and created in His human nature. Likewise, as God, Christ was omnipresent, but as man He was not.¹⁰

While we agree with this passage, we are still hard-pressed to discover what Geisler believes in light of his contradictory statements to Ron Kangas. In the letter he states that the infinite God did not become a finite man. In his *Systematic Theology* he states that Christ was infinite in His divine nature. If Geisler believes that both propositions are true (and he must because he has made them both), then he has violated the law of logical non-contradiction that he evidently prizes. But there is more at stake here. If Christ Himself is infinite, yet the infinite God did not become a finite man, then Christ, if we are to follow Geisler's statements to their logical conclusion, is not fully God. He is something less than fully God yet, inexplicably, He is somehow infinite. Moreover, Geisler's statement that "the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity ... never affirms that God (the infinite) became man (the finite)" strongly suggests that in his theological formula Christ is not the infinite God, despite what he says elsewhere concerning Christ being infinite in His divine nature. How are Geisler's readers to reconcile these statements? Is Christ the infinite God or is He not? If He is infinite, then what is wrong with saying, "The infinite God became a finite man?" Is this not the story of the incarnation?

Geisler Interprets the Word "Became" with a Definition that neither Ron Kangas nor the Bible Intends

Geisler seems to take particular exception to the word "became" in Ron Kangas's statement that "God is infinite, and man is finite, yet in Christ the two became one," and apparently he applies a definition for "became" that neither Ron Kangas nor the Bible intends. In his *Systematic Theology* Geisler writes:

The Eternal did *not* become temporal, nor did the divine nature become human at the Incarnation any more than the human nature became divine. As a matter of fact, this is the monophysite heresy condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 454 [sic¹¹]: It is a confusion of the two natures of Christ. In the Incarnation, the divine nature did not become a human nature or vice versa. Rather, the divine *person*—the second person of the Trinity—became human; that is, He assumed a human nature in addition to His divine nature. Notice carefully the words of Scripture: "The Word was God... the *Word* became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:1, 14, emphasis added). It does not say that *God* became flesh. It is as impossible for God to become man as it is for an infinite to become a finite or an uncreated to become created. As Athanasius (c. 293-373) would say, the Incarnation was not the subtraction of Deity, but the addition of humanity. God the Son did not change His divine nature; rather, He added a distinct human nature to it.¹²

For Geisler, then, any thought that the infinite God became a finite man compromises the essential immutability of the Godhead by suggesting that the divine nature has metamorphosed into (i.e., “became”) a human nature. But that is not what Ron Kangas means by his use of the word “became,” as even a cursory reading of “Economy” makes clear:

At this point it would be profitable, and perhaps necessary, to restate the twofold nature of the truth regarding God in His Godhead and God in His economy, that is, the truth of the immutability of God and the process of God, both of which we must believe. God’s immutability is related to His being in His essence, and God’s process is related to His becoming in His economy. In particular, God’s process is related to the two becomings of Christ: His becoming flesh through incarnation (John 1:14) and His becoming the life-giving Spirit (the Spirit) through resurrection (7:39; 14:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:45). These two becomings, as stages of God’s process in Christ, are an economical, not essential, matter; they are changes that involve God’s economy, not God’s essence. (10)

The divine essence with the divine nature cannot change, and no change to it was effected through the incarnation or the resurrection, as Ron Kangas clearly enunciates. Nonetheless, as Ron Kangas also affirms, the Bible does state that “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14) and that “the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45), and these declarations indicate that God in Christ has passed through a process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection for the carrying out of His eternal plan, or economy. In that process, Christ took upon Himself a genuine human nature for the redemption of mankind (John 19:5; Heb. 2:14; 10:5), and He retains an uplifted and glorified humanity forever (Acts 7:56; 1 Tim. 2:5; Phil. 3:21; Heb. 2:7, 9). Further, in resurrection Christ’s humanity was pneumatized, that is, made spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17; Phil. 1:19), and as the Spirit—the life-giving Spirit—He imparts His divine life and uplifted humanity into His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people (John 20:22; Rom. 8:9-11). The process that God underwent in Christ is economical, that is, it was undertaken for the accomplishment of His divine economy, and the divine essence suffered no change but was preserved eternally in the divine process. God, therefore, remains eternally transcendent and the Godhead eternally inviolable; yet in His move for His economy, God has become what we are so that we may become what He is, as Athanasius also recognized.¹³

Geisler’s efforts to define “became” within the context of his own theological paradigm are severely strained. He seems able only to separate the persons of the Trinity to arrive at an explanation for the incarnation (i.e., that the Son came into humanity apart from the Father and the Spirit). But by contending for his own contrived definition of “became,” it seems that Geisler’s real argument is not with Ron Kangas but with the language of the Bible in John 1:14 and 1 Corinthians 15:45 because it does not conform to his theological presuppositions. When Ron Kangas used the word “became,” he was simply quoting the Bible; when Geisler challenges the word “became,” he is objecting to the Bible’s own wording. For Geisler, the use of “became” to describe the incarnation implies that in becoming a finite man, Christ ceased to be the infinite God. Therefore, Geisler actually insists that we abandon the language of the Bible. In interpreting others’ words, he applies his own definitions to supersede both the words of the divine revelation in the Bible and the carefully explained definitions of those whom he criticizes. Christ certainly “assumed a human nature in addition to His divine nature,” as Geisler states, but the Christ who assumed that nature was conceived of the Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35),

worked by the Spirit (Matt. 12:28), and indwelt the Father and was indwelt by the Father (14:10, 20; 17:21); thus, “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). To be sure, Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the infinite God—the Triune God—and is not merely one-third of God. Any insistence to the contrary bears tritheistic implications and, therefore, runs the risk of heresy. Regardless of how much the notion of God becoming man chafes against Geisler’s philosophical biases, it is the revelation of the Bible. After all, is this not the mystery of the incarnation, that is, the mystery of godliness, that God Himself became a man (1 Tim. 3:16)?

Two contemporary theologians who have expressed wonder that the infinite God could become a finite man are Wayne Grudem and Alan K. Scholes.¹⁴ Grudem writes:

At the end of this long discussion, it may be easy for us to lose sight of what is actually taught in Scripture. It is by far the most amazing miracle of the entire Bible—far more amazing than the resurrection and more amazing even than the creation of the universe. The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become man and join himself to a human nature forever, so that infinite God became one person with finite man, will remain for eternity the most profound miracle and the most profound mystery in all the universe.¹⁵

Scholes concurs:

Now it is time to try to answer what is undoubtedly one of the most perplexing questions in all of theology. How is it possible for the infinite God to fit inside a finite human mind and body? How is it possible for the omnipresent God to walk the hills of Galilee and to be in only one place at a time? How can the omniscient and omnipotent God be “increasing in wisdom and stature” as Luke describes Jesus? In short, how is it possible for God to become a man?¹⁶

We doubt if Geisler would imply that respected theologian Wayne Grudem is heretical for stating that “infinite God became one person with finite man,” and we are certain that he would not harass Alan K. Scholes, a fellow signer of “An Open Letter to the Leadership of Living Stream Ministry and the ‘Local Churches’,” for asking (in reverent awe and not in contentious doubt) how it is “possible for God to become a man.” And yet Geisler seeks to impugn Ron Kangas for expressing the same thought.

Geisler Separates the Persons of the Trinity

While Geisler undoubtedly would balk at the suggestion that he harbors latent tritheistic inclinations, the evidence from his own writing and reasoning at least raises the question in a discerning reader. If logic is what Geisler depends on for his formulation of Trinitarian doctrine, then one must recognize that his arguments concerning the Divine Trinity and the incarnation of Christ logically lead to the conclusion that the Persons of the Trinity are indeed separate from one another and are, therefore, three separate Gods.

In the passage cited from his *Systematic Theology* above, Geisler makes the following nonsensical argument:

Notice carefully the words of Scripture: “The Word was God... the *Word* became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:1, 14, emphasis added). It does not say that *God* became flesh.

The absurdity of this statement, which abuses the language of the Bible, cannot be overstated. If the Word is God and the Word became flesh, then why does Geisler take issue with the assertion that God became flesh? Is Christ not fully God? He certainly is. In fact, the Scriptures confirm that He is God “manifested in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16) and that the blood He shed was God’s “own blood” (Acts 20:28). It seems that for Geisler the complete, infinite God is an amalgam of separate persons who each share a portion of the divine essence but who are not fully God in themselves and who do not coinhere. In the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* he writes:

By saying God has one essence and three persons it is meant that he has one “What” and three “Whos.” The three Whos (persons) each share the same What (essence). So God is a unity of essence with a plurality of persons. Each person is different, yet they share a common nature.¹⁷

Under the influence of this definition, Geisler’s insistence that only the second Person of the Trinity, and not “God,” became flesh might make logical sense. But this is not “the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity,” which Geisler purports to defend. Rather, the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity recognizes that the three Persons coinhere, or mutually indwell one another (John 14:10-11; 17:21), and cannot be separated from one another (10:30; 14:9; Matt. 1:18, 20; 12:28; Heb. 9:14).¹⁸ Further, the divine essence is undivided and indivisible, but Geisler’s statement that the Three persons (the personal “Whos”) share the divine essence (the impersonal “What”) strongly suggests that, in his assessment, the divine essence is instead apportioned among them. However, by virtue of their coinherence, each of the Three persons possesses the divine essence with the divine nature in its entirety and is not each a separate God sharing an indefinable “What.” Each is the complete God, yet—wondrously!—there is only one God and not three Gods (Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4).

Prior to stating that “the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity ... never affirms that God (the infinite) became man (the finite)” in his letter to Ron Kangas, Geisler poses the question, “Can logical opposites both be true?” Geisler is insistent that the pronouncements of Scripture must be reconciled within a framework of logical uniformity to be properly understood.¹⁹ While such order may satisfy a theological bent for systematization, the divine revelation is not confined to the limitations of man-made logical systems of thought. The coinherence of the Three Persons of the Divine Trinity certainly explodes all such systems as there is not even a corresponding illustration of it in the creation. Coinherence may appear illogical since in the natural realm two entities (not to mention three!) cannot live within each other at the same time. If we apply such constraints to our understanding of God, we will conclude that it is not the infinite God who became a finite man but only one-third of God (i.e., the Son) who was involved in the incarnation. This, however, is not the revelation of the Bible.

Significantly, the error that ensnares Geisler (i.e., that the Son is separate from the Father and the Spirit) is one that Ron Kangas addressed in “Economy” in order to combat tritheism, the heresy

that there are three separate Gods. It is helpful to reproduce that part of the article at length here with its quotations from the ministry of Witness Lee:

The God who is uniquely one, self-existing, ever-existing, and immutable is essentially triune; He is three-one—three yet one, one yet three. From eternity to eternity the unique God, the Triune God, is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The Father is God (1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:17), the Son is God (Heb. 1:8; John 1:1; Rom. 9:5), and the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). The Father is eternal (Isa. 9:6), the Son is eternal (Heb. 1:12; 7:3), and the Spirit is eternal (9:14). All three co-exist; they exist simultaneously and immutably. Among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in the eternal Godhead, there is distinction but no separation. The Father is distinct from the Son, the Son is distinct from the Spirit, and the Spirit is distinct from the Son and the Father. However, they are not separate, and cannot be separate, because they coinhere, dwelling in one another mutually:

The relationship among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is not only that They simultaneously coexist but also that They mutually indwell one another. The Father exists in the Son and the Spirit; the Son exists in the Father and the Spirit; and the Spirit exists in the Father and the Son. This mutual indwelling among the three of the Godhead is called coinherence... We cannot say that They are separate, because They coinhere, that is, They live within one another. In Their coexistence the three of the Godhead are distinct, but Their coinherence makes them one. They coexist in Their coinherence, so They are distinct but not separate. (Lee, *Crucial*²⁰¹ 9-10)

This is neither tritheism nor modalism. Tritheism, an error on the side of the threeness of the Triune God, is the bizarre notion that the three persons in the Godhead are three separate Gods. This is heresy. Modalism, an error on the side of the oneness of the Triune God, is the strange concept that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are merely three modes, three temporary and successive manifestations, of the one God, who is not regarded as essentially triune. This also is heresy. The revealed, biblical truth, being twofold according to the principle of the twofoldness of divine truth, embraces both the oneness and the threeness of the Triune God: God is uniquely one, yet He is three-one—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit....

At this juncture, it is necessary to point out the difference between the essential Trinity and the economical Trinity. The essential Trinity is a matter of the essence of the Triune God for His eternal existence; the economical Trinity is a matter of God's arrangement for His operation in His move to accomplish His eternal purpose. An excellent presentation of this distinction is offered by Witness Lee:

The essential Trinity refers to the essence of the Triune God for His existence. In His essence, God is one, the one unique God (Isa. 45:18b; 1 Cor. 8:6a). In the essential Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit coexist and coinhere at the same time and in the same way with no succession. There is no first, second, or third.

Essentially, God is one, but economically He is three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). In God's plan, God's administrative arrangement, God's economy, the Father takes the first step, the Son takes the second step, and the Spirit takes the third step. The Father purposed (Eph. 1:4-6), the Son accomplished (vv. 7-12),

and the Spirit applies what the Son accomplished according to the Father's purpose (vv. 13:14). This is a successive procedure or a succession in God's economy to carry out His eternal purpose. Whereas the essential Trinity refers to the essence of the Triune God for His existence, the economical Trinity refers to His plan for His move. There is the need of the existence of the Divine Trinity, and there is also the need of the plan of the Divine Trinity.

The Father accomplished the first step of His plan, His economy, by working to choose and predestinate us, but He did this in Christ the Son (Eph. 1:4-5) and with the Spirit. After this plan was made, the Son came to accomplish this plan, but He did this with the Father (John 8:29; 16:32) and by the Spirit (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:18, 20; 12:28). Now that the Son has accomplished all that the Father has planned, the Spirit comes in the third step to apply all that He accomplished, but He does this as the Son and with the Father (John 14:26; 15:26; 1 Cor. 15:45b, 2 Cor. 3:17). In this way, while the divine economy of the Divine Trinity is being carried out, the divine existence of the Divine Trinity, His eternal coexistence and coinherence, remains intact and is not jeopardized. (*Crucial 9-10*)²¹

If Geisler takes issue with the exposition found in this long passage from the very article that he faults for advancing an unorthodox theology, then we must wonder whether he believes that the Three of the Trinity are not merely distinct but also separate, a position that is contrary to the biblical record. To say that the Three are not only distinct but also separate is the basic error of tritheism. But in fact the Three of the Trinity coinhere from eternity to eternity; thus, when Christ took upon Himself flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14)—and it is He who did so and not the Father or the Spirit—He did not do so alone. Rather, He did so by the Spirit, of whom He was conceived, and with the Father, whom He embodied. Therefore, the infinite God—the Triune God—became a finite man in Jesus Christ while yet preserving His immutable essence and eternal, infinite deity.

Conclusion

It is unfortunate, even troubling, that a man with Geisler's recognized standing in the Christian apologetics community could so unabashedly misrepresent and then attack the writing of a teacher of the Bible. Geisler's attack, however, actually exposes the shortcomings of his own understanding of the Triune God and the incarnation of Christ. In his misdirected zeal to find fault, he cries "heresy" where there is none and exposes his own error in the process. By insisting that the infinite God did not become a finite man in Jesus Christ and by relegating the incarnation to the entrance of one-third of God into humanity, Geisler has laid bare the shortage in his understanding of the incarnation and of the coinhering oneness of the Divine Trinity.

¹ Although Geisler claims to have sent the letter, Ron Kangas has no record of its delivery. He only became aware of the letter when it was posted on the Internet as an appendix to the 2010 article by Geisler and Ron Rhodes assailing the Christian Research Institute's positive reassessment of the teachings and practices of the local churches.

² While Geisler claims to have sought "dialogue" with Ron Kangas and a "clarification" of his views, the tone of his letter is one of contentiousness and not one of seeking genuine understanding in a spirit of Christian fellowship. In fact, his letter is sadly reminiscent of the insidious questioning of the Pharisees, who sought to entrap our Lord by seizing upon His words and using them, wrongly interpreted, to accuse Him of error (see Luke 20; for a helpful note concerning the Pharisees' questioning of the Lord Jesus, see Luke 20:40, footnote 1, in the Holy Bible Recovery Version, published by Living Stream Ministry).

³ *Affirmation & Critique*, April 2008 (3-14). The entire article is available at: http://www.affcrit.com/pdfs/2008/01/08_01_a1.pdf.

⁴ For an explanation of the principle of the twofoldness of divine truth and biblical examples demonstrating its application, see “Reflections: The Twofoldness of Divine Truth,” by Ron Kangas in *Affirmation & Critique*. For a brief overview of how Geisler’s criticism of this principle is in error, see “A Misplaced Criticism of ‘The Twofoldness of Divine Truth.’”

In the context of this article, it is noteworthy that Ron Kangas’s mentions of the principle of twofoldness in “Economy” were not in reference to the incarnation; rather, they were in reference to 1) the oneness and threeness of the Trinity, 2) Christ having a physical body and yet being the life-giving Spirit, and 3) the essential immutability of God and the economical process that He went through to accomplish His eternal purpose. If Geisler contends that the principle of twofoldness is invalid because it violates the law of logical non-contradiction, then he must be prepared to repudiate these (and other) seemingly contradictory declarations of the Scriptures.

⁵ Geisler offers the following definition of a straw man argument:

Another way to stack the deck against the opposition is to draw a false picture of the opposing argument. Then it is easy to say: “This should be rejected because this (exaggerated and distorted) picture of it is wrong.” The name of the fallacy comes from the idea that if you set up a straw man, he is easier to knock down than a real man. And that is exactly the way this fallacy works: set ‘em up and knock ‘em down. It is argument by caricature. It avoids dealing with the real issues by changing the opposition’s views. (Norman Geisler and Ronald Brooks, *Come, Let Us Reason*, p. 101)

Despite his recognition of a straw man argument as a logical fallacy, Geisler does not show any hesitation to employ such an argument against Ron Kangas.

⁶ Christ is one person with two distinct natures, the divine and the human, and *A&C* is replete with affirmations of this cardinal truth of the Christian faith. For a particularly helpful review of the doctrine concerning the two natures in Christ and the rejection of early heresies that undermined that doctrine, see “‘Mingling’—Was There Ever a Better Word?,” *A&C*, July 1996, pp. 31, 62. Of the many affirmations concerning the two natures in Christ that have been offered in *A&C*, Ron Kangas offers the most succinct of all: “Christ has two natures: humanity and divinity” (“The Heavenly Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *A&C*, October 1998, p. 9).

⁷ Historically this has been referred to by the Latin *tertium quid*, or “third thing.”

⁸ The charge has been duly and thoroughly answered in sources too numerous to list here, but a few examples available in print are: “‘Mingling’—Was There Ever a Better Word?,” *Affirmation & Critique* I:3, July 1996, pp. 31, 62; *A Confirmation of the Gospel: Concerning the Teachings of the Local Churches and Living Stream Ministry* (Anaheim, CA: DCP Press, 2009), 24-29; and John Campbell, “The Ministry of Christ in the Stage of Incarnation,” *Affirmation & Critique* III:2, April 1998, 4-13.

⁹ Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, 2002), p. 13.

¹⁰ Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 2: God, Creation* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2003), pp. 177-178.

¹¹ The Council of Chalcedon was held in A.D. 451.

¹² Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 2: God, Creation* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2003), pp. 109-110.

¹³ Athanasius wrote, “For He was made man that we might be made God.” (“The Incarnation of the Word” [54:3], *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Vol. 4*, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1891, 1978], 65).

¹⁴ For a sampling of quotes from others, see “Scholars Who Affirm That the Infinite God Became a Finite Man.”

¹⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 563.

¹⁶ Alan K. Scholes, *What Christianity Is All About: How to Know and Enjoy God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1999), 89.

¹⁷ Norman Geisler, *The Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), p. 732. In his *Systematic Theology* Geisler elaborates further:

Like the Trinity, the Incarnation is also a great mystery. Some even claim it is a contradiction, for it affirms that in Christ God became man, and this is impossible, since God is infinite and man is finite—an infinite

cannot become finite. The Eternal cannot become temporal any more than the Uncreated can become a creature. How then can we claim that the Incarnation does not violate the law of noncontradiction?

The answer to this apparent contradiction lies in the misstatement of what the Incarnation really is. It was not God *becoming* man, but the second person of the Godhead *adding* humanity; in other words, the Son of God did not stop being divine in order to become human, but rather He embraced another nature—humanity—in addition to His divinity. In the Incarnation, the infinite nature of God did not become finite; the second person of the Godhead, who retained His infinite nature, also assumed another nature (a finite one). As we put it before, in God there is one *what* (nature) and three *whos* (persons).

In the Incarnation, Who took on What, a human nature, in addition to the What He retained (His divine nature). This is not a contradiction because the infinite did not become finite, nor the Uncreated become the created, which would be a contradiction.

In the Godhead there is one What and three Whos; in Christ, the second person of the Godhead, there is one Who and two Whats. In the Incarnation, one Who in God assumed another What, so that there were two Whats (natures) in one Who (person). Again, this is an amazing mystery but not a contradiction. (Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1: Introduction, Bible*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002, pp. 93-94.)

¹⁸ These verses are discussed in more detail in “The Error of Denying the Involvement of the Father in the Son’s Work” and “The Error of Denying That the ‘Son’ Is the ‘Eternal Father’ in Isaiah 9:6” on this site.

¹⁹ We affirm, as the Scriptures do, that God is a God of order and not of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33; Isa. 45:18). We also profess that the order inherent in logical principles bears witness to the orderliness and wisdom of the Creator. However, as the Scriptures also testify, God transcends human logic and is not bound by it (cf., Isa. 55:8-9). Philip Schaff is helpful here:

The person of Jesus Christ in the fullness of its theanthropic life cannot be exhaustively set forth by any formulas of human logic. Even the imperfect, finite personality of man has a mysterious background, that escapes the speculative comprehension; how much more then the perfect personality of Christ, in which the tremendous antitheses of Creator and creature, Infinite and finite, immutable, eternal Being and changing, temporal becoming, are harmoniously conjoined! (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Vol. III: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1910, 1994], p. 749.)

²⁰ Witness Lee, *The Crucial Points of the Major Items of the Lord’s Recovery Today* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1993).

²¹ Ron Kangas, “The Economy of God: The Triune God in His Operation,” *A&C*, April 2008, pp. 5-6.