

Scholars Who Affirm That the Infinite God Became a Finite Man

And through the flesh He wrought divinely those things which are proper to divinity, showing Himself to have both those natures in both of which He wrought, I mean the divine and the human, according to that veritable and real and natural subsistence, (showing Himself thus) as both being in reality and as being understood to be at one and the same time infinite God and finite man, having the nature of each in perfection, with the same activity, that is to say, the same natural properties... But between God the Maker of all things and that which is made, between the infinite and the finite, between infinitude and finitude, there can be no kind of comparison, since these differ from each other not in mere comparison (or relatively), but absolutely in essence. And yet at the same time there has been effected a certain inexpressible and irrefragable union of the two into one substance, which entirely passes the understanding of anything that is made. Hippolytus, "Against Beron and Helix," *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. V, translated by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1851, 1981), p. 231.

Although the assuming nature in Christ is infinite and the assumed nature remained finite, yet because of the hypostatic union such a relationship is produced between the infinite and the finite that one hypostasis is constituted. Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, translated by J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1578, 1971), p. 96.

But this assumption of our nature into hypostatical union with the Son of God, this 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. John Owen, *Christologia*, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/christologia.vii.html>.

Here, then we see one great spiritual fact, one great law and mystery, that between God and man there is a person who is both Man and God; consubstantial with the Creator and the creature, the finite and the infinite; that by one consubstantial unity He is God, by the other, Man. Henry Edward Manning, *Sermons*, vol. 4 (London: William Pickering, 1850), p. 185.

I like to think of the Holy Spirit handling such things [testifying concerning Christ]. They seem so worthy of him... Now is his mighty mind among the infinities when he has to deal with Christ, for Christ is the Infinite veiled in the finite. Why, he seems something more than infinite when he gets into the finite; and the Christ of Bethlehem is less to be understood than the Christ of the Father's bosom. He seems, if it were possible, to have out-infinite the infinite, and the Spirit of God has themes here worthy of his vast nature. C. H. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. 37, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons37.xxxii.html>.

...So we may say of Christ that He is finite and infinite; that He is ignorant and omniscient; that He is less than God and equal with God; that He existed from eternity and that He was born in time; that He created all things and that He was a man of

sorrows. It is on this principle, that what is true of either nature is true of the person, that a multitude of passages of Scripture are to be explained. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. II (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), p. 392.

The divinity of Christ, and his whole mission as Redeemer, is an article of faith, and, as such above logical or mathematical demonstration. The incarnation or the union of the infinite divinity and finite humanity in one person is indeed the mystery of mysteries. "What can be more glorious than God? What more vile than flesh? What more wonderful than God in the flesh." Yet aside from all dogmatizing which lies outside of the province of the historian, the divinity of Christ has a self-evidencing power which forces itself irresistibly upon the reflecting mind and historical inquirer; while the denial of it makes his person an inexplicable enigma. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. I: *Apostolic Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1910, 1991), pp. 107-108.

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.

Thus, the person of the God-man is unique. His birth had no precedent and His existence no analogy. He cannot be explained by referring Him to a class, nor can He be illustrated by an example. The Scriptures, while fully revealing all the elements of His person, yet never present in one formula an exhaustive definition of that person, nor a connected statement of the elements which constitute it and their mutual relationships. The "mystery" is indeed great. How is it possible that the same person should be at the same time infinite and finite, omnipotent and helpless? He altogether transcends our understanding. A. W. Pink, *Gleanings in the Godhead*, http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Gleanings_Godhead/godhead_30.htm.

To claim that Jesus Christ is not God himself become man for us and our salvation, is equivalent to saying that God does not love us to the uttermost, that he does not love us to the extent of committing himself to becoming man and uniting himself with us in the Incarnation. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Spring, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1992, p. 59.

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

Thus the Incarnation constitutes the one actual source and the one controlling centre of the Christian doctrine of God, for he who became man in Christ Jesus in order to be our Saviour is identical in Being and Nature and Act with God the Father revealed in and

through him. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (London: T&T Clark, 1996), p. 18.

The incarnation. This is the new act of the eternal God whereby God himself becomes man without ceasing to be God, the Creator becomes creature without ceasing to be Creator, the transcendent becomes contingent without ceasing to be transcendent, the eternal becomes time without ceasing to be eternal. *ibid.*, p. 214.

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

The union of the two natures concurs in one Person, who is the eternal Son of the Father. The union, then, of the divine and the human in Christ is a personal one; more specifically, the union is the act of the divine Person who is the Son of God. Here we approach the very heart of the mystery of the Incarnation. No one can say how the infinite God could become a finite man. Naturally, however, theologians have thought a great deal about the matter; Chalcedon does not mark the end of all inquiry. Walter Elwell and Philip Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), p. 267.

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