

IS THERE A CONTRADICTION IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST? THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DUAL NATURE AND DUAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST

by
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How does one fully penetrate the truths that God is sovereign over all, yet humans are responsible for their actions; that God is three persons in one essence; or that the person of Jesus Christ has a dual nature and a dual consciousness? The orthodox² answers to these questions have given rise to many attacks. The person of Jesus Christ seems to be the subject of the most recent ones. Opponents of orthodoxy have denied Christ's pre-existence, opposed his Virgin Birth, and claimed that the biblical teaching concerning his person is contradictory.³

On the surface, the Bible does seem to make contradictory statements concerning the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus can say that he is leaving the disciples to go to the Father (John 14:28; 16:5, 16) yet also claim, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20).⁴ Jesus can be tired (Matt 8:24) while at the same time calming a storm in the middle of the Sea of Galilee with just a spoken word

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²From the Greek word *orthodoxia* (*orthos*, "right," and *doxa*, "opinion") "meaning right belief, as opposed to heresy;" belief that matches up to the teaching of the NT (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "Orthodoxy," by J. I. Packer, p. 808).

³See John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993); John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992); *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate Between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan*, ed. Paul Copan (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).

⁴Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are taken from the NASB, 1995 updated edition.

(Matt 8:26). He claims to know all that the Father is doing (John 5:19–20) and yet we are told that he increased in wisdom (Luke 2:40, 52) and learned obedience through the things which he suffered (Heb 5:8).

Thus, at one and the same time Jesus acted and spoke as both finite and infinite, and was conscious of this fact. He was localized in body and yet omnipresent. He could become exhausted and yet was omnipotent. He did not know certain things and yet was omniscient. How can this be true of one person? To be both finite and infinite in one person is a contradiction, is it not? It would certainly be true for us. Why not for Christ? To answer this question we must remember that a true contradiction is a state of affairs that is and is not, at the exact same time and in the exact same way.⁵

Jesus Christ certainly claimed to be both finite and infinite at the exact same time. However, neither he nor his followers ever claimed, explicitly or implicitly, that he was finite and infinite in the exact same way. Instead, his one self-consciousness had two distinct natures with two separate consciousnesses, making him both finite and infinite at the exact same time, but never in the exact same way. As a result, Jesus Christ is not contradictory in person.

To prove this assertion we first examine evidence for the two distinct natures and consciousnesses of Christ and then discuss how they can operate in the one person without contradiction. The importance of these truths, however, reaches far beyond the solving of a contradiction of person, so we briefly sketch out two additional benefits of Christ's dual nature and dual consciousness before concluding.

JESUS HAS A DIVINE NATURE WHICH INCLUDES A DIVINE CONSCIOUSNESS

Jesus has a divine nature that exhibits divine attributes, one of which is a divine consciousness. Therefore, it makes sense that he is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. To prove Christ's divinity, we traditionally begin by noting that Scripture asserts his deity.⁶ John

⁵Aristotle defines the principle of contradiction as follows: "Nothing can both be and not be at the same time in the same respect" (*The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. "Principle of Contradiction," by Richard Purtill, p. 737).

⁶Brevity is allowable here since I am not attempting to defend Christ's divinity against the inveterate attacks of his enemies. There is a time and place to defend, but that is not my purpose. I only seek to explain the obvious truths of Scripture. Furthermore, I follow Dr. Rolland D. McCune's order of argumentation in proving the deity of Christ (Rolland D. McCune, "Systematic Theology II," [Class Syllabus, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001] pp. 90–104). For other traditional examples of argumentation see Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., 3 vols. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994), 1:282–302; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (reprint

proclaims, "The Word was God" (John 1:1). After meeting the post-resurrection Jesus, Thomas testifies, "My Lord and My God" (John 20:28). Paul proclaims in Romans 9:5, "From whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever." In Hebrews, the Father says of the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever" (Heb 1:8; cf. John 1:18; Phil 2:6; Titus 2:13; 2 Pet 1:1; 1 John 5:20).

Second, divine names are ascribed to Christ. He is called the "Son of God"⁷ (Matt 16:15–17; 26:63–65; Luke 1:35; John 5:17–18; 10:32–33, 36; 19:7). He is designated the "Lord" (Luke 2:11; John 13:13; Rom 10:9; Phil 2:10–11), a name used to translate the OT name "Yahweh" in the LXX and NT (cf. Isa 40:3 with Matt 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4–6, and John 1:23; Isa 8:12–13 with 1 Pet 3:14–15; and Joel 2:31–32 with Acts 2:20–21 and Rom 10:13). He is referred to as the "Holy One" (Acts 3:14; cf. Hos 11:9; Isa 48:17), as well as the "Alpha and Omega," the "first and the last" (Rev 1:8; 22:13; cf. Isa 44:6; 48:12–16). Isaiah calls Him "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father" (Isa 9:6).

Third, divine attributes are ascribed to Christ. He has self-existent life (John 1:4; 14:6), eternity (Isa 9:6; Mic 5:2; John 8:35; 1 John 1:2; 5:11), immutability of person (Heb 1:10–12; 13:8), omnipresence (Matt 18:20; 28:20), omniscience (John 1:47; 2:24–25; 4:16–19; 6:64; 16:30; 21:6, 17; Rev 2:2, 9, 13; 3:1, 8, 15; Matt 11:27; 17:24–27; Luke 5:22; 9:47), omnipotence (Phil 3:20–21; John 2:19–20; 5:19b; Matt 8:26–27; Luke 4:39; 7:14–15), incomprehensibility (Eph 3:19; Matt 11:27), infinity (Eph 3:8–9; Col 2:3; John 10:28), holiness (Luke 1:35; Acts 3:14; 1 John 3:5), truth (John 14:6), love (1 John 3:16; Eph 3:19; Rom 8:35–39; John 13:1), righteousness (1 John 2:1; 2 Tim 4:8), faithfulness (Rev 3:14; 19:11), and mercy (Jude 21; Jas 5:11). In summation, Paul testifies that "in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col 2:9).

Fourth, divine works are performed by Christ. He created all things (John 1:3, 10; Col 1:16), and continues to providentially hold all things together (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3). As a result, he controls all history (Heb 1:2; 1 Cor 10:4, 9, 11; Rev 1:20; 5:5; 6:1, 5, 7, 9). He forgives sin and gives eternal life to those whom the Father has given him

ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 1:483–521; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), pp. 699–720; Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1907), pp. 305–15; Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), pp. 211–312; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp. 543–54.

⁷When Jesus called God his Father, the Jewish leadership knew that he was making himself equal with God (John 5:18). Thus, the title "Son of God" speaks to Christ's divine nature.

(Mark 2:5–12; John 10:28). He builds the church of which he is the head (Matt 16:18; 1 Tim 3:15; Eph 4:7–16). He answers prayer (John 14:14; 2 Cor 12:7–9), a prerogative of deity. He is the resurrection and the life, the one who raises the dead (John 5:21, 28–29; 11:24–25). It is he who will judge the world (John 5:22; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Matt 25:31–46; 2 Cor 5:10). And in the end, he will make all things new (Rev 21:5).

Fifth, Christ demands equal honor with his Father (John 5:23). As such, he encourages and accepts worship of himself (Matt 14:31–33; 15:25–28; 28:9–10; 16–18; John 9:35–39). The Father even commands the angels to worship him (Heb 1:6), which they do (Rev 5:8). Eventually every knee will bow in submission to Jesus Christ (Phil 2:10–11). Since God alone is to be worshipped (Matt 4:8–10), not angels (Rev 22:8–9) or apostles (Acts 10:25–26; 14:11–15); Jesus is God.

Sixth, Christ has authority over God's laws and institutions. He is greater than the temple (Matt 12:6). The Son of Man is "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matt 12:8). He is the supreme interpreter of the Mosaic Law (Matt 5:31–34, 38–39). He is the one who gives the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to the church (Matt 16:19), over which he is the head (Eph 1:21–22). Thus, he is divine.

Finally, he is the object of saving faith on an equal plane with the Father. Jesus said, "Believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). He reinforced this truth in his great high-priestly prayer: "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). Yet Jesus is also the exclusive focus of salvation. For example, John 3:36 reads, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (cf. Matt 10:37; 11:28). Thus, Scripture inescapably concludes that Jesus Christ is God. He has a divine nature.

The Divine Nature

Before we go further we need to define the term *nature*. A nature may be viewed as a complex of attributes.⁸ For example, the nature of a ball is its roundness, either spherical (e.g., baseball), or oblique (e.g., football). A ball, then, has the attribute of roundness, among other things.

The divine nature is also a complex of attributes. We have noted several of these: omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence. Each of these attributes refers to different qualities found in the divine nature. The attribute of omniscience means that Jesus knows all things past, present, and future, both simultaneously and thoroughly. The

⁸William W. Combs, "Does the Believer Have One Nature or Two?" *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 2 (Fall 1997): 83–87.

attribute of omnipresence means that Jesus is everywhere present in the whole of his divine essence at the exact same time. The attribute of omnipotence means that Jesus can do all things consistent with his nature. Nothing is too difficult for him. While each of these attributes has separable “talking-points,” all of them inhere in unity in the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, Jesus’ divine nature has the attribute of consciousness. A divine consciousness is as much an attribute of Jesus’ divine nature as is his omniscience. Inanimate objects do not have the attribute of consciousness. Our “proverbial” ball has certain attributes which give it a “ball” nature, but it lacks consciousness. A divine consciousness is an indispensable attribute of the divine nature.

The Divine Consciousness

So what can we say about consciousness? I believe we can define consciousness as a complex of awarenesses. Natures, as we have suggested, are complexes of attributes. But awarenesses are different than attributes. An attribute is a characteristic of a person, place, or thing that is part of its nature. An awareness is a characteristic of consciousness and is therefore only the property of a sentient life-form...animals and persons.⁹

Animals have an awareness of their physical being. They have, what we might call, an “animal” consciousness. That is, they have a physical awareness of when they are tired, hungry, etc., and they do something about it. However, persons have awarenesses that transcend the physical. They, also, have rational, spiritual, and moral awarenesses.

Jesus, as a person, has a divine nature, which includes a divine consciousness. He is always aware of who he is as God the Son. He is aware that he came down from Heaven (John 6:38). He is aware that he is everywhere present (Matt 28:20) even though he has a localized body. He is aware of his knowledge of all things. For example, he knows where to send Peter to fish in order to obtain money for taxes from the fish’s mouth (Matt 17:24–27). He is aware that he can do all things in keeping with his character. He knows that he and his disciples are not at risk in the boat being tossed about in a storm on the Sea of Galilee. He is able to still the storm (Matt 8:26–27) because all elements of nature report to him.

Furthermore, Jesus is aware of his Father’s will. He came into the

⁹Plants, for example, do not have the attribute of consciousness. They do not experience awareness. They merely react to their environment chemically or mechanically. Plants have a plant nature, but consciousness (a complex of awarenesses which includes self-knowledge) is not one of them.

world to do it (Heb 10:5–7). He alone knows the Father and only the Father knows who Jesus truly is. If one desires to know the Father, then he must listen to the Son who reveals him (Matt 11:27). And if one wants to know the Son, then he must listen to the Father, who alone reveals him (Matt 16:15–17).

In his divine nature Jesus is aware of all his divine attributes and their powers perfectly and experientially. He is also aware of all his creation's natures, attributes and respective powers perfectly, but not experientially through the divine nature alone. This is because he has a divine nature and a divine nature by definition has a divine consciousness, not a human consciousness and certainly not an animal consciousness. So when Jesus makes statements and performs certain acts that are consistent with a person who is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, it makes sense because he has a divine nature which includes a divine consciousness.

JESUS HAS A HUMAN NATURE WHICH INCLUDES A HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

The text of Scripture also is clear that Jesus is human. He has a human nature that exhibits human attributes, one of which is a human consciousness. Therefore, it makes sense that he is localized, progresses in knowledge, and, at times, becomes tired, hungry and thirsty.

Most believe that Jesus is human. There are several reasons for this.¹⁰ First, Jesus directly asserted that he is a man. He told the crowds, "You are seeking Me, a man who has told you the truth" (John 8:40). Peter calls Jesus "a man attested to you by God" (Acts 2:22). Paul also testifies that the only mediator between God and man is "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5; cf. Rom 5:15 and 1 Cor 15:21).

Second, Jesus calls himself the "Son of Man." While this is clearly a Messianic title,¹¹ it also demonstrates that Jesus partook of the character qualities of a man. He was born of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom 1:3). Thus, he was a descendent of Israel (Rom 9:5) who partook of flesh and blood like all humanity (Heb 2:14).

Third, Jesus had a body (John 2:21; Matt 26:26, 28; Luke 24:39; Heb 2:14), a soul (Matt 26:38; John 12:27), and a spirit (Luke 23:46; John 11:33). In this body, soul, and spirit, he developed as a normal

¹⁰Again, I follow, for the most part, McCune's order of argumentation for proving Jesus' humanity (McCune, "Systematic Theology II," pp. 104–8). For other traditional support see Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pp. 721–38; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 529–43; Strong, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 673–81; William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd ed., ed. Alan W. Gomes (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), pp. 646–48.

¹¹Reymond, *New Systematic Theology*, pp. 215–18.

human. He had a pre-natal period where Mary carried him in her womb (Luke 2:5). She gave birth to him (Luke 2:12) and he “continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom” (Luke 2:40). He grew up a carpenter’s apprentice to Joseph and died at the approximate age of 33 (cf. Luke 3:23). He was human.

Fourth, Jesus exhibited the attributes of a human being. He had emotions like compassion (Matt 9:36), anger (Mark 3:5), love (Mark 10:21; John 13:23), sorrow (John 11:35; 12:27) and agony (Luke 22:44). He became hungry (Matt 4:2), thirsty (John 19:28), and tired (John 4:6; Matt 8:24). He was inquisitive (Luke 2:46) and learned the consequences of obedience (Heb 5:7–8), even to the point of death (Luke 22:42; Matt 26:39; Phil 2:6–8). He also prayed (Matt 14:23).

Fifth, being human, he appeared human. He looked like a man. Some mistook him for John the Baptist or Elijah. Still others mistook him for Jeremiah (Matt 16:13–14). The woman at the well recognized that he was a Jew (John 4:9), and Mary thought he was a gardener (John 20:15). He looked like a man, because he was a man.¹²

The Human Nature

It is an obvious conclusion that Jesus had a human nature. He had a complex of attributes that are the properties of a human nature. He was localized in place. It could be said of Jesus that he was in Bethlehem, or Galilee, or Samaria, or Jerusalem. It was never said of him that he was bodily in Jerusalem and Galilee at the same time. A human nature cannot do this, for a body, which is a property of the human nature, is not ubiquitous.¹³

Furthermore, Jesus grew in wisdom (Luke 2:40, 52). Certainly growing in wisdom includes growth in knowledge. Jesus learned to eat, to talk, to read, and to write. He learned the experience of obedience, yet never learned the experience of disobedience. In his human nature he was not omniscient. A human nature does not have the property of omniscience. It is finite in knowledge, not infinite.¹⁴

¹²Scripture does tell us that he lacked one thing human beings have. He lacked a sin nature (Heb 4:15–16; Rom 8:3; 2 Cor 5:21). Yet a sin nature is not a necessary characteristic of humanity. Adam and Eve also lacked one before their first sin and both were human from the beginning. So Jesus was human, yet had no sin nature.

¹³Contra the Lutheran view. For the Lutheran view of Christ’s ubiquity, see Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), pp. 317–26.

¹⁴It does not follow from this that Jesus ever thought wrongly or forgot things. Wrong thinking and forgetfulness are not predicated of man before the Fall. It is not an inherent attribute of human nature. For the possibility that Jesus forgot things in his human nature see Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, p. 620.

Moreover, Jesus was limited in power as a human. As noted, he tired and became hungry and thirsty. He could not continue to function without food to eat, water to drink, and air to breathe—all functions of a human nature existing upon earth. In his human nature, he was not omnipotent. He could not do all things. A human nature does not have the power of omnipotence. It is finite in ability, not infinite.¹⁵

The Human Consciousness

Jesus was aware of his limitations as a human, because he had a human consciousness as an attribute of his human nature. Jesus was aware that he could not be everywhere present in his body. He could not be in Jerusalem *and* Bethlehem bodily at the same time. Jesus also was aware of his limitation in power as a human. He needed sleep, while God never slumbers nor sleeps (Ps 121:3–4). He needed food to sustain His energy (Matt 4:2) while God is never hungry. He became thirsty on the cross (John 19:28), while God in the divine essence does not know thirst by experience.

Furthermore, Jesus was aware that his human nature did not know all things (Mark 13:32; Matt 24:36). He progressed in knowledge and wisdom, just as he grew in stature (Luke 2:40, 52). Exactly when Jesus recognized that he was the Messiah from the standpoint of his human consciousness is difficult to say. It seems that his human consciousness would not have known that he was the Messiah in the womb or as a newborn baby. However, by the time he turned twelve we find him in his “Father’s house” (Luke 2:42–51) listening to the teachers and asking them questions (Luke 2:49). So by the age of twelve he knew that he was the Son of God.

In all likelihood, early in his infancy, he quickly but progressively came to know the significance of his work on the earth. He always knew the will of the Father perfectly, and without taint of sin when he was supposed to know it, for the Father and the Logos revealed it directly to his human nature.¹⁶

¹⁵This limitation is not a sin. Man, as a created being, was created finite in ability. It is the order of things for a human nature to have finite ability as a property. Even glorified humanity, with all the wonderful change that God will perform, will continue to be finite in location, knowledge, and ability. And this is true of Jesus’ human nature as well.

¹⁶Jesus came to identify Himself as Messiah in his human consciousness by direct revelation from God, not by sheer human reasoning. At what stages and how fast this directly revealed knowledge was vouchsafed to the human consciousness, we do not know. Scripture is silent on the subject. But that it was progressive in nature it seems safe to say, since a human consciousness develops in knowledge and awareness from infancy to adulthood. Furthermore, even near the end of his life on earth, Jesus still did not know the exact time of his return (Mark 13:32; Matt 24:36). So, Jesus progressed in awareness and knowledge from the standpoint of his human consciousness.

Certainly Jesus, as human, was aware of his finite limitations. However, at a certain time his human consciousness, also, became aware that he, as a person, through the divine nature was omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. And although he knew these things of the Logos by revelation, his human nature was never experientially aware of these things through the human nature alone. This is because he had a human nature, and a human nature by definition has a human consciousness, not a divine consciousness. So when Jesus made statements and performed certain acts consistent with a person who is localized, progressing in knowledge, and limited in certain powers, it makes sense because he had a human nature which included a human consciousness.

JESUS HAS A DUAL NATURE AND DUAL CONSCIOUSNESS UNITED IN ONE PERSON

One could posit just a human Christ or just a divine Christ and not have to deal with the problem of contradiction in person. The rub comes when we posit, on the basis of Scripture, that Jesus possessed both natures and consciousnesses united in one person. As such, he is both finite and infinite at the exact same time, a statement that leads to the charge of contradiction. This charge, however, is proven false when we understand how Christ's dual nature and dual consciousness operate within the one person.

A History Lesson

At this point, a history lesson should help us understand the issues a little better. Opponents of orthodox Christianity have attacked the person of Jesus from the very beginning. Second-century Ebionites denied the genuineness of Jesus' deity, rejecting Jesus' pre-existence and virgin birth and teaching that Jesus was a human son of Joseph and Mary. They argued that the Father bestowed the Spirit on Jesus at his baptism because of his legal obedience, and only in this regard held him in high honor. Ebionism was simply Judaism corrupting parts of the church with its error.¹⁷

Late in the first-century, a sect called Docetism denied the genuineness of Jesus' humanity. They argued that Jesus only appeared to be human. To them, Jesus could not have had a "real" material body because the material world was evil; therefore, Jesus was not truly human. Docetism was simply pagan Greek philosophy infiltrating the

¹⁷H. Wayne House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 53, 55; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pp. 710–11; Strong, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 669–70; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "Ebionites," by V. L. Walter, pp. 339–40.

church.¹⁸

During the fourth century, Arius propagated an idea similar to that of the Ebionites. He also deprecated the divine nature, but rather than denying its outright genuineness, he denied its equality with the Father and thus denied its completeness. Although Arianism taught that the Logos predated Bethlehem, to Arians, he was created by the Father and of a different essence. He was of “like” essence (*homoiousia*), not of the “same” essence (*homoousia*). This Logos was united to Jesus, but Jesus was less than deity to Arius.¹⁹

Also during the fourth-century, Apollinarius denied the completeness of Jesus’ human nature. Apollinarianism reached farther toward the truth than Doceticism, which denied the human nature of Christ altogether. Rather, Apollinarianism taught that Jesus, being God, received a body and a soul but no rational element, which Apollinarius posited was a function of the spirit in man. To him, Christ did not have a human spirit. Therefore, the Logos assumed an irrational human nature, which impugned its integrity.²⁰

A fifth-century heresy advocated by Nestorius a bishop of Constantinople, denied the union of Jesus’ human nature and divine nature. There was no real incarnation, only an alliance between God and man. So Jesus was actually two persons, not one, with the human nature being completely controlled by the divine. Nestorianism denied the union of the two natures in one person.²¹

Finally, also in the fifth century, Eutychius, a leader of a monastery in Constantinople, denied a proper union of the two natures in one person. To him, after the incarnation, the human nature of Jesus was swallowed up in the divine nature, thus creating a third nature [*tertium quid*]. Neither nature was actually the same after the fusion. The human nature was different than other human natures and the divine nature was different than the divine nature of the Son of God from eternity past. Jesus was neither human nor divine to Eutychius.²²

¹⁸House, *Charts of Christian Theology*, pp. 53, 55; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pp. 729–30; Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 670; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. “Docetism,” by G. L. Borchett, p. 326.

¹⁹House, *Charts of Christian Theology*, pp. 53, 55; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pp. 711–15; Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 670; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. “Arianism,” V. L. Walter, pp. 74–75.

²⁰House, *Charts of Christian Theology*, pp. 54–55; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pp. 730–32; Strong, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 670–71; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. “Apollinarianism,” by V. L. Walter, pp. 67–68.

²¹House, *Charts of Christian Theology*, pp. 54–55; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pp. 743–44; Strong, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 671–72; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. “Nestorius, Nestorianism,” by H. Griffith, pp. 758–59.

²²House, *Charts of Christian Theology*, pp. 54–55; Erickson, *Christian Theology*,

These six heresies seem to sum up all heresies concerning the person of Christ to one extent or another. Heresies denigrate the divine nature of Christ by either denying its existence (Ebionism) or arguing that it is incomplete, not equal with the Father's (Arianism). Other heresies do damage to the human nature by either denying its reality (Doceticism) or arguing that it is incomplete (Apollinarianism). Finally, other heresies denounce the proper union of the natures in the one person of Christ by either dividing the natures to make two people (Nestorianism) or combining the natures into one, thus creating a third nature (Eutychianism).²³

The church councils at Nicea (A.D. 325) and Constantinople (A.D. 381), the Synod of Ephesus (A.D. 431), and the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) were convened to counteract these heresies and state the truth concerning Jesus' person. The Council of Chalcedon achieved consensus on a fairly complete statement that all orthodox scholars have since accepted as true to biblical teaching. A portion of the statement reads as follows:

We, then, following the holy Fathers,²⁴ all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [coessential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, *inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.²⁵

Against Ebionism and Arianism, Chalcedon stated that Jesus did

pp. 744–47; Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 672; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. “Monophysitism,” by D. A. Hubbard, p. 730.

²³Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 672, and Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 738, for helpful summaries.

²⁴“Following the holy Fathers” in regards to the Nicene Creed.

²⁵English translation from Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, rev. David S. Schaff, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 3:62–63.

have a divine nature and it was equal with the Father's. He was "perfect in Godhead"; "truly God"; "consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead"; "begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead";²⁶ "God."

Against Doceticism and Apollinarianism, Chalcedon stated that Jesus did have a real and complete human nature. He was "perfect in manhood"; "truly man"; "consubstantial with us according to the manhood"; "in all things like unto us, without sin"; "born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood."

Against Nestorianism, Chalcedon decreed that Jesus' two natures were united in one person. The statement reads, "The property of each nature being preserved and concurring in one Person and Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons." Against Eutychianism, Chalcedon declared, "...to be acknowledged in two natures, *inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved and concurring in one Person and subsistence."

The importance of Chalcedon's statement becomes apparent for our discussion. It summarily taught that *we must neither divide the person nor confound the natures*. Thus, Chalcedon presents us with a problem but also offers a solution. The problem is that the actions and statements of this *one* person seem contradictory. How can one person be omnipresent and not omnipresent at the same time? How can one person be omniscient and not omniscient at the same time? How can one person be omnipotent and not omnipotent at one and the same time? The solution to this problem is found in not confounding the dual nature and dual consciousness of the God-man. For there to be a contradiction, Jesus must be both omniscient and not omniscient, omnipresent and not omnipresent, omnipotent and not omnipotent at the exact same time *and* in the exact the same way. Since Jesus has a dual nature and a dual consciousness, he is never all these things in the exact same way. To defend this position, we consider several basic truths concerning how Christ's dual nature and dual consciousness operate within the one person.

Christ's Natures Do Not Conflict

Even though Christ has two distinct natures, neither nature conflicts with the other, thereby producing a contradiction in statement or action. This is because the divine nature of the Logos is the higher, controlling nature in the God-man.

Before the incarnation, the Logos, existed as the Second Person of

²⁶Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 244–45; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "Only Begotten," by E. F. Harrison, p. 799.

the Trinity, but the theanthropic person (God-man) did not exist. "Jesus" did not exist until the Logos assumed into his person a human nature derived from a human mother at the incarnation. It was only then, in fulfillment of prophecy, that Mary called his name "Jesus."

Moreover, at the incarnation the Logos assumed into his person an unindividualized human nature.²⁷ We would not address the human nature which Christ assumed before the incarnation as "you."²⁸ Rather, we address it as a part of the lump of clay called humanity, unindividualized at this point.

The human nature which Christ assumed at his incarnation did achieve personal existence, but only in the person of the Eternal Son. It did not gain its own unique personhood distinct from the Logos; instead, this genuine human nature, having all the properties pertaining to a human nature, was personalized in the Second Person of the Trinity.²⁹ Thus, it became fully functioning and individualized in the God-man.

The Logos, then, changed only by addition, not conflation. He added to himself a human nature, which was personalized through his own person and included a human consciousness.³⁰ As a result, the

²⁷Personality, then, is not an essential part of a genuine human nature.

²⁸Christ did not assume a human person, with the divine person taking over at incarnation, or we have a form of Nestorianism. Contra Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pp. 748–49. I agree with Murray that "the very notion of personality can never be predicated of [the incarnate Son] except as it draws within its scope his specifically divine identity. And if this is so, it is not feasible to speak of his 'human personality'" (John Murray, review of D. M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ*, in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, 4 vols. [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976–1982], 3:343).

²⁹At incarnation, the essence of the Trinity did not change so that the Trinity's essence now contains both a body and a soul. Rather, the essence of the Trinity remains the same, with the Second Person of the Trinity remaining an equal part of the one essence. The Son of God did not assume a human nature into the unity of Trinity. Instead, the Second Person of the Trinity, Himself, assumed a human nature and personalized it in the unity of his own person (see Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, p. 641, supplement 5.1.1).

³⁰One may ask whether this human nature, personalized through the Logos, has a legitimate human consciousness or not. If in its unindividualized form it is not personal, then when did its human consciousness come into existence, if it did? We answer this question by first noting that one of the attributes of a fully operating personalized human nature is consciousness. For example, plants do not enjoy consciousness. God, carefully, distinguishes between plants and animals/man during His account of creation. Animals and men are called "living creatures" or "living-souls" (Gen 1:20–21, 24; 2:7), while plants are not referred to in this way. I propose that the difference between plants and animals is that plants do not have an awareness of physical life. Thus, a plant's nature does not enjoy the property of consciousness. Animal life does, but its consciousness terminates in an awareness of the physical, while a human nature's consciousness expands to include physical, spiritual, moral and rational powers. A genuine, individualized human nature, then, has a consciousness that is

Logos is the basis of the God-man's personhood. This truth alleviates any possible conflict or contradiction between the natures, because the human nature is subordinate to the Logos.

The fact that the natures do not conflict, however, does not fully answer the accusation of contradiction in the person of Christ. It does not completely tell us how these two united natures operate within the one individual person of the God-man who is omnipresent and not omnipresent, omniscient and not omniscient, omnipotent and not omnipotent at exactly the same time; rather, it only informs us that a contradiction does not exist as a result of the two natures in the one person conflicting with each other. We need further information to answer the accusation of contradiction of person.

Christ's Natures Communicate Their Properties to the Person

The properties of each nature are communicated to the one person. Thus, Jesus acts and speaks as a whole person, not in contradiction, even though he acts and speaks from the standpoint of two natures.³¹ On the one hand, Jesus' divine nature, through its property of divine consciousness, informed him of his infinite attributes (properties). Thus, Jesus knew that he had power over nature: he could multiply loaves and fishes (Luke 9:16–17); he could still the storm (Matt 8:24–26); he could providentially control a fish to get caught on Peter's hook (Matt 17:27). He knew that he was Lord of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8). He knew he could even forgive sin on the earth (Luke 5:24). He knew that he upheld all things by the word of his power, even while he was also localized on earth (Heb 1:3). He also knew that he had the power to raise himself up from the dead (John 2:19–21).

Furthermore, he knew that even after his ascension into Heaven (John 16:28; 17:11; Acts 1:9–11) he still would be everywhere present at the same time from the standpoint of his divine nature (Matt 18:20; 28:20; John 14:23). He also knew, as a person, that he eternally existed before all things. He told the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was born, I

expressed through a person.

So when the Son of God assumed an unindividualized human nature at the incarnation, and personalized it through, the Logos, a human consciousness (a complex of awarenesses), which is a necessary part of a personalized human nature, was actualized. Thus, the Logos added to his singular person, which already included a divine nature with a divine consciousness, a human nature which included a human consciousness.

³¹The Bible never ascribes the actions of the person of Christ to either nature. We never read anywhere that "the divine nature upholds everything by the word of its power." Nor do we ever read that "the human nature was tired." It is the person of Christ who providentially controls the universe's activity and it is the person of Christ who becomes tired.

AM," equating himself with the eternal God (cf. Exod 3:14 with John 8:58). These are just a few things that the God-man was aware of through the divine consciousness.

On the other hand, this same person was keenly aware that he is also finite. His finite human consciousness residing in the human nature informed him that this is so. Jesus knew when he was tired, thirsty and hungry. He knew that he developed in wisdom and knowledge. He continued to learn obedience through the things which he suffered (Heb 5:8). In all probability, he did not immediately know the woman who had touched his garment (Mark 5:30–32). He certainly did not know the exact time of his return—he told his disciples so (Mark 13:32).

In addition, near the end of his ministry he knew that he was about to leave the earth (John 14–16). He would no longer be around bodily, for his body was finite and localized. He also was aware that while on earth he could not bodily be in Jerusalem and Galilee at the same time.

Beyond this, the person of Christ knew that he would experience death. Death is fundamentally separation. The divine nature cannot be separated, because the divine essence is Spirit; therefore, God cannot die. Only a human being with a human nature can die, because a human nature has a material part (body) and an immaterial part (soul, spirit) which separates at death. Thus the person of the God-man, having a human nature, experienced death and was aware of this experience through his human consciousness. Consequently, the human consciousness of the God-man informed him that he was finite in some areas of his personhood, but only with respect to his human nature.

Knowing that the properties of each nature are communicated to the one person, so that Jesus acts and speaks as a whole person, moves us one step closer to answering the accusation of contradiction in his person. However, it does not help us completely answer this accusation in the life of Jesus Christ. One might argue that both natures are so united that they share their properties with the one person in the same way at the same time and thus, in practice, lose their distinction.³² This would set Jesus up for a contradiction in person. To avoid this error we must consider another truth concerning the operation of these two natures in the one person.

Christ's Natures Do Not Communicate Their Properties to Each Other

The properties of each respective nature are not shared with the

³²This is the error of Eutychianism, also called Monophysitism.

other.³³ Thus, even though both natures act at the same time, they never act in the same way. The divine nature never gets tired, thirsty or hungry: it is omnipotent. The divine nature is never localized; it is omnipresent. It does not need to learn because it knows all things. In other words, the divine nature has infinite powers and a divine consciousness that is aware of these attributes. It never shares these properties with the human nature, nor does it ever share in the properties which belong to the human nature. In fact, it cannot share in the properties of the finite human nature, or else it no longer remains divine. It becomes some mixture of natures that confounds the natures and leaves the person of the God-man open to the criticism of contradiction.

On the other hand, the human nature of the God-man is not omnipotent, omnipresent, or omniscient. It only has finite powers and a human consciousness that is aware of these properties of its human nature. It, too, never shares these properties with the divine nature, nor does it ever share in the properties which belong to the divine nature. It cannot, or else it would no longer remain a human nature. Instead, it would become some mixture of natures that combines into one, again leaving the person of the God-man open to the criticism of contradiction.

This truth, that the properties of one nature do not pass over into the properties of the other nature, brings us close to a solution regarding the charge of contradiction in Christ. While the same person experiences the properties of both the finite and infinite at the same time, he does not and cannot experience the finite and infinite in the exact same way, for his dual consciousnesses residing in his dual natures remain distinct from each other, and never act in the exact same way. While this may seem to solve the problem at hand, one more insight is helpful.

Christ's Natures Share in the Experiences of Each Other Through Their Respective Consciousnesses

Each respective consciousness shares in the experiences of the other nature through the one person. By limiting the sharing of the natures to *experiences* through the one person and *not* the sharing of *properties* between natures, we continue to avoid contradiction in the person of Christ. Meanwhile, we open up the important actuality that the human nature can and does share in some of the experiences and prerogatives of the divine and vice-versa.

Before the incarnation this could never happen. Before the incarnation the person of the Son of God never experienced human

³³Contra Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 563.

emotion, human growth and development, human tiredness and hunger, human locality, or human progression in knowledge and time. He knew nothing of finiteness in time, space, knowledge, and ability by experience for he had only a divine nature. He was only self-consciously infinite.

Yet after the incarnation, both natures could and did experience the actions of the other, with the Logos always in control of the experience. For example, the Logos had power over the God-man's life and he could lay it down in death at his pleasure (John 10:17-18). And even though the Logos could not die, he experienced what it was like to go through death personally, because his person did experience death through the human nature. In this sense "the Lord of glory was crucified" (1 Cor 2:8). This never could have happened before the incarnation.

Moreover, the divine consciousness experienced what it was like to progress in knowledge through the human nature of the God-man, although in itself the divine consciousness was omniscient. And the experience was real, because the person, through his human nature, did not know certain things (Mark 13:32; Heb 5:8).

The Logos also experienced what it was like to be finite in place through the one person. Even though he was in Heaven, he nevertheless was localized on the earth (John 3:13) and his divine consciousness was aware of this. So the divine consciousness of the Christ experienced what it was like to be finite. He was never finite in the property of his divine nature, but he did experience finitude in his person from the standpoint of the human nature. And the divine nature shared in this experience while remaining omnipresent.

On the other hand, the human nature of Christ was able to experience the powers and abilities of the divine nature. The God-man forgave sin that had offended a holy God. He did not just forgive the sin of someone who had offended him inter-personally, he forgave sin against God. The human consciousness of Jesus experienced this ability to forgive, not by granting forgiveness in and of itself, but by experiencing what it was like to forgive sin through the person of Christ (cf. Luke 5:24).

Furthermore, the human nature of Jesus, even with limited knowledge, still knew amazing things. Even Solomon with all his wisdom did not know what the God-man knew (Matt 12:42). In his human consciousness Jesus was aware that he was the only way to the Father (Matt 11:25-27; John 14:6). He was aware of the joy in Heaven over one sinner that repents (Luke 15:10). He knew that the Father loves little children (Matt 18:10, 14). He was aware that the Father had sent him to do the Father's will (John 5:30; 6:38, 57; 8:16, 29; Luke 2:49; 22:42; 24:6-7). He was also aware that he was subordinate to the Father in function and thus was dependent on the Father and the Spirit to carry out his mission (John 5:19-20; 8:29; 14:28,

31). He knew that he was the Savior of men (Matt 11:27–30; Mark 2:10; Luke 19:10; John 6:40, 51; 8:12; 11:25–26; 12:46). He was conscious in his human nature that he, as the God-man, had power over nature, disease, demons, sin and the Sabbath (Matt 8:26; Mark 1:41; 3:4; Luke 4:35, 39, 41; 9:42).

He was conscious in his human nature that he was the Messiah (Matt 16:17; Luke 9:20; John 6:68–69) and of the fact that the Father was pleased with him (John 3:35–36; 6:27). He was aware that one day he would die, be buried, be resurrected from the grave, ascend up into Heaven and return to earth in glory after a period of time (Matt 16:21; 24:29–30; John 14:1–3). The reason he knew these things in his human consciousness is that the Logos revealed them to him.³⁴

So the human consciousness of the Christ experienced some of the abilities of the divine nature without sharing in the properties of the divine nature. The human consciousness never thought that it was infinite in presence, knowledge or power, but it did share in these many experiences through its union with the divine nature in the one person of Christ.

The fact that both consciousnesses share in each other's experiences is significant. It demonstrates how the death of a human being could result in infinite benefits for sinners. And, *this*, obviously, is critically important.

IMPORTANCE OF DUAL NATURE WITH DUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The fact that Jesus had a dual nature with a dual consciousness not only demonstrates how Jesus is non-contradictory in person, it is also necessary for the effectiveness of Jesus' saving work in at least two ways. First, Jesus' dual nature and dual consciousness are important for his work as redeemer. Man has a problem that man cannot solve: God is holy; he created man to be holy; and to be holy man needed to live up to the standard of righteousness, which God had revealed in his Law. God wrote this law on the heart of every human being he created

³⁴The humanity of Jesus Christ was, then, limited in what it knew. Even though the human nature knew amazing things well beyond Solomon's great wisdom, still Christ only knew the deep things of the Spirit as the Logos pleased to vouchsafe this information to him. As he progressed from the embryo stage in his mother's womb, to birth, to childhood, and through his adulthood, the divine knowledge of the Logos was revealed to his human consciousness in progressively perfect measure. At no time did the human consciousness of Jesus ever lack the information it needed. Yet at all times it was dependent upon the divine consciousness of the Logos to disclose the appropriate information progressively, and will be so throughout eternity. Thus, Jesus did increase in wisdom (Luke 2:52). He progressed in knowledge, from the standpoint of his human nature. He also became progressively aware of many significant things in the overall plan of God as the Logos revealed them to him.

(Rom 2:14–15) and also in the pages of Scripture (e.g., the Mosaic Law Code—Exodus, Deuteronomy; and the Law of Christ—Gal 6:2; 1 Cor 9:19–23). Man must remain in perfect conformity to God's Law to fulfill the purpose for which God made him (Gal 3:10, 12). However, as we know, all men have broken God's law (Rom 3:23) and are condemned as a result.

God's solution was simple in plan, but infinitely costly and complex to carry out. The Law's demands had to be met (Gal 3:13): death for sin and perfect righteousness for acceptance. Since man's sin had offended God, man must die. But beyond this, man's sin had offended an infinitely holy God and only an infinite payment for sin would satisfy God's justice. Man could die, but He could never make an infinite payment for sin, because he was finite.

Here, however, Jesus Christ the God-man enters the picture. As God, he could not die, but as man he could and did die. As man he could not make an infinite payment for sin by his death on the cross, but as God he could and did make an infinite payment for sin. Because neither nature shared in the properties of the other nature, both natures could do the necessary job for redemption. Furthermore, since both natures communicated their properties to the person, we may say that the God-man died. And, finally, since each nature shared in the experiences of the other nature via the dual consciousnesses, we may say with confidence that "the Lord of glory was crucified for our sins" (1 Cor 2:8). This is why a dual nature and a dual consciousness, as has been described, are so important.

Second, Jesus' dual nature and dual consciousness are important for his work as intercessor. As a result of the incarnation, Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and man. The ancient believer Job complained, "For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. There is no umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both" (Job 9:32–33). Job claimed that there was no one who could take up his part before God, who knew what it is like to be a man of sorrows and weaknesses like him.

In Job's time this was true, but no longer. Jesus has both a divine and a human nature. While the properties of each nature remain distinct, Jesus is able to undergo human sorrow and weakness directly through the human nature. And, in addition, the divine nature experiences what human sorrow and weakness are like via the person. As a result, Jesus is the one true mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5). And in this capacity, he is able to save completely and forever anyone who seeks his saving grace, because he is an able redeemer and intercessor (Heb 7:25).

Without the attributes of a divine and human consciousness and the sharing of experiences between them through the one person, there would be no mediator between God and man. If Jesus had no divine consciousness, he would prove ultimately to be an unfit mediator, for

he would not have God's true perspective. If Jesus had no human consciousness, then he would also prove ultimately to be an unfit mediator, for he would not have man's true perspective. However, because he is the God-man, Jesus is a fit and able mediator between God and man. He will be fair when he judges and merciful with his children as he intercedes for them. As a result, the Father accepts both Jesus' work as redeemer and intercessor.

CONCLUSION

While Jesus says and does several things that seem to be contradictory, he actually is demonstrating by his words and deeds exactly who he is. First, Jesus has a divine nature, so statements and actions that would lead us to believe that he is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent make sense. He also has a human nature, so statements and actions that would lead us to believe that Jesus is localized, is thirsty, hungry, and tired, and also learns make sense.

The rub comes when we posit that both these natures are united in one person. As a result, one who is omnipresent yet not omnipresent at the same time seems contradictory. The same holds true for one who is omniscient and omnipotent and yet at the same time shares in human "weaknesses" of needing to learn, rest, eat, and drink. However, this state of affairs in the person of Christ is not contradictory when we correctly understand how his dual nature and dual consciousness operate within his one person.

First, Jesus is not at the mercy of two opposing natures within his one person. Jesus' personhood is grounded in the Logos. At conception the Logos added an unindividualized, impersonalized human nature to his person, and gave it personality in the process. As a result, the Logos always governs the relationship between the divine and human natures in Christ.

Second, the properties of each nature are communicated to the one person. Jesus, as a single, self-conscious person, is everywhere present by means of his divine nature, but localized in a body from the standpoint of his human nature. Furthermore, he is aware of this state of affairs, being informed through each nature's consciousness, the one infinite and the other finite.

Yet, third, the properties of each respective nature are not shared with each other. The divine nature never gets tired, thirsty, or hungry—it is omnipotent. The divine nature is never localized—it is always omnipresent. The divine nature never has to learn anything—it is omniscient. Vice-versa, the human nature, is never omnipotent—at times it is tired, thirsty and hungry. The human nature is never omnipresent—it is always localized. The human nature is never omniscient—it progresses in knowledge. Both natures have their own separate consciousnesses and each consciousness is aware that it does

not share properties with the other.

However, finally, each consciousness is aware of the other consciousness in their seamless interaction within the one person. The human consciousness actually shares in the experiences of the divine consciousness, and the divine consciousness shares in the experiences of the human consciousness within the one God-man, as the Logos directs. This is foundational to Christ's provision of redemption and the performance of his priesthood.

Thus, through his dual nature and dual consciousness, the God-man can be both infinite and finite at the exact same time, but never experience contradiction, because he is never infinite and finite in the exact same respect. Consequently, the God-man, as defined in Scripture and attested to by Chalcedon never acts or speaks in a contradictory way.

One last matter: while Jesus escapes the conundrum of contradiction, this does not mean that we have solved all the intricacies of the person of Christ. We may only speak of him as the Bible supports our statements. Beyond this, there are some things too hard to express.³⁵ In such cases, Jesus' person does remain a paradox.

But a paradox is not a contradiction. A paradox is something that is solvable only in God. Yet even though some of the intricacies of Jesus' person remain a mystery, the Bible enjoins us to study and know him (John 17:3; 20:27; Luke 24:39; Phil 3:8, 10). The reason is very simple: to know God through Christ is the goal of our salvation (John 17:3), and our blessed joy forever.

³⁵Murray, "The Person of Christ," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976–1982), 2:136–39.