Hypostatic Union of Christ in Hebrews 2:14-18 and Its Significance To Christians

Dr. M. O. Oyetade.
Department of Religions,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
GSM 08034958631
E-mail Address droyetademich@gmail.com /oyetade.mo@unilorin.edu.ng

Abstract
Much consideration and concentration has been on the birth and death of Christ as if they were the paramount issues about Christ. Little knowledge has been gleaned on who Christ was and still remains when he was on earth which is behind all his achievement. The objective of this paper therefore, is to insist that Christ had the two natures one and at the same time which is called hypostatic union. In other to achieve the set goal, both historical, sociological and exegetical methods were used, and data were gathered through secondary source. The researcher found out that Jesus has two complete natures—one fully human and one fully divine and that these two natures are united *in* one person in the God-man. Jesus is not two persons. He is one person. The hypostatic union is the joining of the divine and the human in the one person of Jesus, and that the union is significant for man's salvation. The paper finally recommends that both natures are without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation, and should be seen as of equal importance and as the background of all that Jesus was and did.
(Keywords: Ὑπόστασις, Κεκοινώνηκεν, ἀπαλλάσσω, ὁμοιωθῆναι, Pre-incarnation, Incarnation)

Introduction

Much consideration and concentration of believers has been on the birth, work and death of Christ and attention is usually drawn to the divinity of Christ but little is said of the humanity of Christ, when talking about the work accomplished by Christ as if they were the paramount issues about Christ. Little knowledge has been gleaned on who Christ was and still remains when he was on earth which is behind all his achievement. The dual nature of Jesus Christ is a core doctrine. All other religions, cults and wolves get this doctrine wrong. Hypostatic union of Christ is defined as "the second person, the pre-incarnate Christ came and took to himself a human nature and remains forever undiminished Deity and true humanity united in one person forever"(Enns, 1982: 196) . According to Hodgson and Robert (1982:196), the significance of the Hypostatic union of Jesus Christ in the life of the Church is worth unfolding. Other religions have heroes, and have testified about them. Christians also have testified about Jesus Christ, pointing out to a particular person who lived at a specific place, i.e first century C.E. and in Palestine.

Verlyn (2000:570) opines that the word hypostasis is a translation of the Greek ὑπόστασις "substance," nature," "essence", and denotes a real personal subsistence or person. From the Greek, ὑπόστασις is translated as "that which stands beneath" or reality. It is a technical term in Christian

theology, mainly used in mainstream Christology to describe the union of the human and diving natures in Jesus Christ. To talk about the union of the two natures as a factual truth about Christ is seen as unintelligible by many scholars. Stephen Neill (1984: 29) asks: "is it conceivable that in Jesus Christ we see what it means to be fully and completely human? People like: Friedrich Schleiermacher, (1992: 49) who rejected the concept of Hypostasis of Christ, criticized the classical doctrine of Jesus' two natures as illogical. Two natures cannot coincide in a single individual. Albrecht Ritschl (1992:57) firmly rejected the traditional belief and argued that the affirmation of Jesus' divinity is a value judgment that Christians make, based on the worth of his life in effecting their salvation.

Klaas Runia's review of the book, *The myth of God incarnate*, shows that the author debates the view of the hypostatic union of Christ. He states that Maurine Wiles, one of the writers of the above named book, asks: 'are we sure that the concept of an incarnate being, one who is both fully God and fully man, is after all an intelligible concept?'(1984: 78-79). These authors saw Jesus as a man appointed by God for a special role within the divine purpose, and that the later conception of him as God incarnate, the second person of the holy trinity living a human life, is a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance to us.

George Barker Stevens (1905: 287) raises a question, disputed in ancient theology, whether the human nature which he assumed in the incarnation was personal or impersonal? In effect, what some scholars, like Maurine Wiles, Albrecht Ritschl and others are arguing about is that the concept of the two natures of Christ is a myth. The mythological concept of divinity putting on humanity was rampant within the historical milieu in which Jesus Christ lived. Thomas Schineller (1993: 55) states that it was self-evident in Greco-Roman world that gods are close to people, at lease in the sense that they intervene in the human world. Gods observes what is happening, get involved, help, hinder, reward, punish and make history.

It was this mystery of the hypostasis of Jesus Christ that the fathers of the ancient church wanted to safeguard over against all kinds of attempts of their day to make the Christian gospel more understandable or more acceptable, by downgrading either Jesus' humanity or his divinity. Therefore the council of Nicea spoke of the man Jesus of Nazareth as *vere dues* and *vere homo* that is, full God and full man, and council of Chalcedon streamlined everything about the unionism of divinity and humanity in Christ, albeit other

councils contributed one or two things toward this (Klass, 1984: 101). This is known as the traditional doctrine of the hypostasis of Christ. Both the New and historic Christian church have declared that he is the divine son of God who, as God's ordained messiah, became flesh. To the question 'whose son is Christ?, Robert Reymond (1990: 323) states "I have tried to allow the very voice of the scripture (ipsissima vox scripture) to supple its answer to these questions". Richard N. Longenecker (1970: 93) remarks that the hypostasis of Jesus is purely seen in the scripture: Martha's affirmation, the demonic recognition of Jesus, and Peter's confession: σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ , "you are the Christ the son of God". The purpose of this paper is to show the most crucial aspect of the person of Christ: the hypostasis of Christ, which has for long been latent. It is to demonstrate that the divine aspect of Christ is as important as his human aspect, for without one, the other would not have achieved anything significant for the church alone. In effect, it is to demonstrate to Christians the uniqueness of the two natures of Christ. The significance of the paper is that when the two natures of Christ is Understood and applied to the lives of Christians, it would restore, liberate and touch lives of individual Christians- helping them understand that Jesus who had tasted humanness is ever willing to see them through. Primarily, it is significance in that it will help pastors, evangelists, missionaries and teachers of the gospel who are often faced with the challenges of upholding, polemically and apologetically, the scripture to explain better what Christ achieved for us and why he was able to achieve them. It is also relevant to the bible-minded individuals to have a grip of what and why Christ had to come and live among men, and finally, of the work he accomplished.

Issues that have to do with Jesus Christ have been handled from different angles, which have actually contributed immensely to scholarship. However, this paper though revolving round Jesus Christ, has its own perspective or scope in the hypostatic union of Christ, as presented in Hebrew 2:14-18, and its significance to Christians. Consequently, this study raises some questions that border on thought-provoking issues such as: but, would the work of salvation have been accomplished if not for the presence of the two natures, divinity and humanity? Did Christ, being God, take up humanity for formality or in vain? Would not the union of the two natures have significance for Christians? In order to achieve the set goal, the author employed the historical, exegetical and sociological methods. In other words, historical method supplies a rich background of the historical dialogues postulated both by different individuals and by the early church

councils to resolve the confusion and /or the dilemma seen in the hypostatic natures of Christ; Sociological method is used to locate the concept of hypostatic natures of Christ in the society, especially in the church, while exegetical method provides the ground for exegesis of the passage chosen and showing the significance of the hypostasis of Christ to believers. Data were gathered through secondary source. This paper allows the voice of the scripture (ipsissima vox scripturae) to show the most crucial aspect of the person of Christ: the hypostasis of Christ, which has for long been latent.

Exegesis of Hebrews 2:14-18

This is read in the Greek New Testament as: **14** ἐπεὶ οὖν τὰ παιδία κεκοινώνηκε σαρκὸς καὶ αἵματος, καὶ αὐτὸς παραπλησίως μετέσχε τῶν αὐτῶν, ἵνα διὰ τοῦ θανάτου καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦτ᾽ ἔστι τὸν διάβολον, 15 καὶ ἀπαλλάξῃ τούτους, ὅσοι φόβῳ θανάτου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας. 16 οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται, ἀλλὰ σπέρματος Ἀβραὰμ ἐπιλαμβάνεται. 17 ὅθεν ὤφειλε κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι, ἵνα ἐλεήμων γένηται καὶ πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, εἰς τὸ ἱλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ. 18 ἐν ᾧ γὰρ πέπονθεν αὐτὸς πειρασθείς, δύναται τοῖς πειραζομένοις βοηθῆσαι (Aland, et. al., 2001: 570).

The translation of this statement in the English Standard Version as: 14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Word Analysis and study

Verse 14: *Κεκοινώνηκεν* is the perfect indicative, third person singular, from *Κοινωνέω* (I share, take part in, contribute) shows the continued sharing of flesh and blood by every generation from the days of Adam until the present. Kistemaker, 1984: 79). According to Louw and Nida (1989: 569), Κοινωνέω also means "to share one's possessions, with the implication of some kind of joint participation and mutual interest—'to share.'" Robertson reminds us that verbs of sharing take genitives as their objects (1934: 509). The perfect tense stresses that this sharing took place and the results continue; at creation we shared in flesh

and blood, and we still do. Human beings share αἵματος καὶ σαρκός. The fact that these words don't have an article stresses the natural meanings of the words. "Flesh and blood" was a stock phrase to describe human beings; the phrase stresses our creatureliness and distinction from God.

Draper (1976: 58) opines that the word is sometime translated "fellowship." It means "to have something in common." αὐτὸς is a reflexive pronoun that forcefully brings Christ back into the verse ("He Himself." Παραπλησίως is an adverb. Lenski (1998: 89) writes that this adverb enhances the verb and does not limit it. Jesus completely shares our humanity. *Μετέσχεν* the aorist active indicative, third person singular, of μετέχω is almost a synonym of κοινωνέω. The natural meaning is "to share in." (Goodrick and . Kohlenberger III, 1999: 1571, n. 3370). In Hebrews 7:13 this verb is used in the phrase "belong to a different tribe." The inference is that Jesus came to "belong" to the group called human beings. The verb is aorist because Jesus' incarnation happened; it's a fact. τῶν αὐτῶν refers to flesh and blood. ἵνα introduces a purpose clause. The whole purpose of the incarnation was our salvation, the crushing of the devil's death grip on humanity. The means (διὰ) by which Jesus accomplished this great feat was His death (τοῦ θανάτου). The article makes death a specific death, Jesus' death on the cross. Death was the only way that the devil's grip could be broken. Someone had to die for sins committed (cf. the comments on "It was fitting" in verse 10). The verb *καταργήσῃ* means "to nullify, abolish, make ineffective." (Goodrick and . Kohlenberger III, 1999:1562), is in the aorist active subjunctive, third person singular, of Καταργεω. It is in a purpose clause and it also stresses that the action happened; Jesus broke the devil's power. The same word is used in 2 Timothy 1:10: ... our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Verse 15: *ἀπαλλάσσω* from ἀπαλλάξῃ. It is an active subjunctive because it's still part of the purpose clause in verse 14. It's aorist because the author stresses that the action happened, our freedom is a fact. It is also third person singular of the verb, and it means "to set free, release." ((Goodrick and .

Kohlenberger III, 1999:1530). This verb ἀπαλλάξῃ, according to Kittel, (1983: 252) continues describing the work Jesus did for us. Jesus freed all people from the slavery they were in, slavery to the fear of death. Kittel states that the basic meaning of word is "to alter by removal," or "to do away", with such nuances as 'to dismiss,' 'to liberate,' 'to absent oneself,' 'to withdraw'. He added that in the NT it occurs 1, in the transitive act in the sense of "to liberate" in Hb. 2:15 (Kittel, 1983: 252). *ἔνοχοι* is from ἔνοχος, a verb that means "subject to, guilty, liable for, in danger" (Kohlenberger III, 1999: 1549). With its etymological derivation from ἐνέχομαι, ἔνοχος , according to Balz and Schneider (1994: 457) , has the basic meaning "held in something."

Although the usage of the term depends on notion of the user, for the term could be used connotatively, judicially and figuratively. Horst and Schneider ((1994: 457) note that: "the only passage in the NT in which ἔνοχος appears with neither connotation of judicial language nor figurative meaning is Heb. 2:15, there ἔνοχος is, to be sure, in a context in which it has a negative meaning ("held in slavery"); the slavery springs from the fear of death".

Verse 16: *ἐπιλαμβάνεται* is from the word ἐπιλαμβάνομαι, and it's a compound verb that has a directive sense: ἐπι points to the goal in giving of the aid and βάνομαι denotes the act of receiving support. The verb *ἐπιλαμβάνεται* means" to take, lay hold of, and take possession of." By a metaphor drawn from laying hold of another to rescue him from peril, the word came to mean "to lay hold of for the purpose of helping or succoring." It is used in this latter sense here. The idea here is that the Lord Jesus, in His work on Calvary's Cross, did not provide for the salvation of fallen angels but for the salvation of fallen human beings, the seed of Abraham by assuming their nature, σπέρματος Ἀβρααμ. In perfect righteousness He passed by fallen angels, and in infinite mercy and condescension, stooped to provide salvation for man. He passed by the superior being to save an inferior being. He gets more glory in taking an inferior being and raising him to an exalted position in Christ Jesus, than in saving a superior being and raising him to those heights of blessedness (Wuest, 1973: 63).

Verse 17: *ὁμοιωθῆναι* is from ὁμοιόω, a verb, meaning "to make like, compare"; *ὁμοιωθῆναι* is an aorist passive infinitive used with ὤφειλεν, and it means "to be like, become like." In the words of Kohlenberger III (1999: 1576). And of course, it is in the passive sense that the word is used in Heb. 2:17.

ὁμοιωθῆναι which means "to be made like someone", is aorist because Jesus really came to earth, it happened. Likeness is asserted without qualification. There was a complete and real likeness to humanity, a likeness which was closest just where the traces of the curse of sin were most apparent-in poverty, temptation, and violent and unmerited death.

γένηται is from γινομαι, a verb, meaning "to be, become, happen, to come into existence, be born." Kohlenberger III (1999: 1576) explains. λάσκεσθαι from ἱλάσκομαι, a verb, meaning in the passive "to have mercy on, be merciful to." But here Kohlenberger III states that, it is used in the "middle voice," and it means "to make atonement for, with a focus on the means for accomplishing forgiveness, resulting in reconciliation."(1999:1558). ὅθεν looks back at everything said in verses 10-16. Jesus needed to suffer in place of the people He wanted to help; for that reason He had to be made like His brothers. ὤφειλεν is an imperfect active indicative verb. The root meaning is "to be obligated." The word often implies a moral necessity. In other words, if Jesus wanted to help us it was necessary that He becomes one of us. David Gooding states:

> Certainly he was under no obligation to save us. No one made him do it. Had he left us to perish in our sinful rebellion against God, we would have had no ground whatever for complaining that he had failed in his obligations toward us. When he stooped to take hold of our hands to help us (2:16), he did so voluntarily (Jn. 10:18). Yes, but once he embarked on this task of helping us, there were certain things that that task itself obliged him to do, if it was to be done perfectly. Once he started, it was unthinkable that he should do it less than perfectly. So for this reason, 'he had to be made like his brothers in every way' (2:17) (1989: 103).

κατὰ πάντα simply means "in every respect" (cf. Acts 17:22, Colossians 3:20). κατὰ πάντα makes it impossible to understand ὁμοιωθῆναι in a weak way. Jesus completely took on our nature as He humbled Himself to live and die for us. τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς is definite because it picks up "brothers" from verse 12 (the quote from Psalm 22:22).

Verse 18: πέπονθεν from πασχω, is the perfect active indicative, third person singular. The verb means "to experience, suffer, and endure" (almost always in NT with reference to unpleasant experiences). Πειρασθείς and πειραζομένοις both are from πειραζω, the first is the aorist passive, nominative masculine singular, while the second is the present passive, dative plural. The verb means "to test, tempt, to try to trap." (Kohlenberger III, 1999: **1070).** *Exhaustive Concordance* states that: "The difference between a test and a temptation is found in the tester's motivations and expectations. The devil tempts that the believer

might fail Gods standards of faith and so sin; God tests that He might determine and sharpen true character, with no focus of making the believer fail." (1999:1070). βοηθῆσαι is the aorist active infinitive of βοηθεω, a verb that means "to help, come to the aid of". Balz and Schneider state that "Christ is sought after in Heb. 2:18 as the one who 'is able to help'" (1994: 223). He is not only able to help, but also willing to help.

The Significance of the Hypostasis of Jesus to Christians

Soteriological Significance

John Williamson Nevin (1803-1886), an American theologian states, concerning the hypostasis of Christ that:

> This view of the hypostasis of Christ is not to be regarded as a doctrine or speculation but as a real transaction of God in the world, it is regarded as being necessarily itself the essence of Christianity, the sum and substance of the whole Christian redemption. Christ saves the world, not ultimately by what he teaches or what he does, but by what he is in the constitution of his own person (1978: 408).

In the opinion of Nevin, the redemption of man was made possible only by the means of the Hypostasis of Christ. In the hypostasis, God took on human form, not simply so that he could do the work which no human had the ability to do, but so that he could be what no human being could be. The hypostasis is the fundamental fact of the Christian redemption because in it God became organically united with the human race in the Person of Christ. In Nevin's thinking, an organic understanding of redemption is necessary because the fall of mankind into sin was organic in nature: "The ruin in which we lie is an organic ruin; the ruin of our nature; universal and whole, not simply because all men are sinners, but as making all men to be sinners. Men do not make their own nature, their nature makes them." (2000: 155). In effect, what Nevin is saying is that men are sinners as a result of the cloth of corrupt humanity handed down from Adam and Eve to the subsequent generations and that Christ took it in order to refine it. Thus, it is not enough for Christ to have simply done for man what man could not do – i.e., atone for sins committed – for this only deals with the guilt of sin. It is more fundamental that Christ be what humanity cannot be, thereby dealing with the organic corruption which entered the race through the disobedience and subsequent corruption of Adam and Eve.

Because of the emphasis he placed on the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures of Christ in his thought, Nevin was led to challenge the doctrine of the Atonement as it was understood in his day by

conservative Protestants, whose understanding was that it was Christ's work of atonement that was most crucial and that the Incarnation (the hypostasis of Christ) was primarily brought about so that Jesus could pay the penalty for the guilt of sins of the world. This way of looking at redemption was unthinkable for Nevin, because it does not deal with the fundamental problem of the organic corruption in human nature. Although he does relegate the Atonement to a secondary status below the Incarnation in his system, Nevin does not do away completely with its significance, for he declares the Atonement to have been necessary for the forgiveness of sins (1978: 43-67). But he is clear that the Atonement is only efficacious to redeem humanity as it relates to the union of the divine nature with humanity in Christ's person.

Even though the researcher subscribes to Nevin's argument that it was the hypostasis of Christ that made his atonement effective, on the other hand, he disagrees with the view that he took on humanity in order to a sort of readjust it. The view of Nevin, is that Christ took humanity in order to reform it, is at par with the view of Hegel who saw the Hypostasis as universal, instead of uniquely Christ. "For Hegel the Hypostasis (incarnation) instead expresses a metaphysical truth: divine essence or substance develops itself into human being. Thus divine nature is the same [thing] as human [nature], and this unity is what is viewed in Jesus." (1995: 278). This would mean that hypostasis pertains to all humanity rather than Jesus alone.

John Knox, on this issue, notes that "if God was to save us, then, it could not be through an action merely in the cosmic environment of human life, or even an action which only bore or pressed on human life from outside; it had to be an action taking place within it" (1967: 31). Because a man sinned, justice demands that a man must die. Therefore, God became a man (fully man) in order to pay the sin debt of a man. However, one man can only pay the sin debt for one man, not for two persons, but on the ground that that man would be absolutely pure. Of course no mortal being can attain this. Besides, the only way one Person can pay the sin debt for all men who have sinned, is if that one Person is a man who has an infinite life to give. Only an infinite and eternal Being could do that because He had to suffer an eternity of God's wrath for each and every sinner. Jesus Christ was fully (100%) man and fully (100%) God, and therefore He is the only Person who can satisfy the sin debit for all men.

The Theological Significance

The theological significance of the Hypostasis of Christ better explains why Jesus behaved in one way; in different occasions, and behaved in another way; in still other different occasions. On the face of it,

this seems rather odd. However, the early church debates about this were generated because the church was trying to get clear who and what Christ was. What gives people a hard time is the "limitations" Jesus had when He was here on Earth. They wonder how Jesus could be God if He was so limited. Following are some of the limitations they refer to: (1) Jesus was weak physically (in comparison to what you would expect from an Almighty God), (2) There were many things Jesus did not know, (3) If Jesus was God, why was He "talking to someone else" when He was praying. (4) Jesus could not keep Himself from being murdered. (5) How could God "die?"

If Christ is more than a mere human, how is he different from other mere humans? Is he a sort of superman, an angelic being, or a divine entity who merely appears to be human? Or is he both divine and human, not a hybrid of these two things but God and man both together in one person? And if he is both God and man, is he fully God and fully man? How can these things be predicated of one individual when it appears that such a view yields contradictions of the sort that imply one person is both omnipotent and impotent, both omniscient and yet limited in knowledge, both omnipresent and yet circumscribed by a human nature, and so on? Are there reasons Jesus was limited or should we consider His limitations substantial proof He isn't God? There are fundamental reasons why He was limited here on earth. This is what the Hypostasis of Christ seeks to explicate – why it was so that Jesus behaved in one way, and also in the other way – showing clearly the two natures.

Pre-incarnation

Derickson, (1997: 313) argues that pre-incarnation is the best prove of the deity of Jesus, "for if He be not pre-existent then He be not God". Theophany is a combination of two Greek words, "theos" which means "God" and "epiphaneia" which means "a shining forth," or "appearance," and was used by the ancients to refer to an appearance of a god to men. The word "theophany" refers to an Old Testament appearance of God in visible form. Christophany is by definition an Old Testament appearance of Christ, the second person of the Trinity. Most theophanies (Old Testament appearances of God) are Christophanies (Old Testament appearances of Christ). Examining some of these Christophanies will help discern which ones actually appearances are of Christ or not.

Throughout the Old Testament there is a majestic personage of Super-natural aspect and workings who acts in the name of Jehovah and bears titles and attributes of Deity. He is commonly called, "The

Angel," or "The Angel of the Lord," "The Angel of His Presence (or face)," "My Angel" (God talking) "Messenger of the Lord" (Jehovah), and "Angel or Messenger of the Covenant." He can be none other than Deity, and is identified with Christ. He appears as an Angel and sometimes as a Man in the Old Testament. The proof that this Angel is Christ is seen in His appearance to Joshua (Joshua 5:13); Accepting of worship. Hallowed ground - Captain of Lord's host, as Exodus 3:2, 14. This Captain is the Angel of God presented (Exodus 14:19; 23:23; 32-34).

The New Testament writers, Paul, John, and the Hebrews author affirmed Christ pre-existence not in the context of proving the doctrine, but instead mentioned it for the purpose of making another point. The writers understood and accepted its teaching as a cord belief. Paul's books were written within the concept of pre-existence of Christ. Delon Bradley (n.d: 4). noted that "If Christ is not affirmed as the God's pre-existent son, then the central texts of Paul's letter is in jeopardy." John also begins his Gospel stating Christ pre-existence; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." And later continues his doxology in stating; "the Word became flesh." However, this Word, 'became flesh,' means that He was in existence before He became flesh and that He was not flesh before He became it. So what was He before He became flesh? He was God himself. The Hebrews Christ is both the creator of the world and the sustainer of all things. The author argues the superiority of the Son over the angels, and addresses him as Lord and God (Mealand, 1979: 183)

To answer the question, "Did Christ have an eternal personal existence before He was born of the Virgin Mary?" is to settle many other questions as to His essential Deity, and the reality of incarnation. Knox's statement is crystal clear in explaining Christ's divinity and why Christ had to behave in some specific way, as against the other way:

> If Jesus was really the pre-incarnate son of God, we should not have expected his life to be so normal, so free from any hint of his divine status and nature, as we know it to have been. But since it was in fact such a life, there must have been some powerful reason for its being such. The reason would be nothing but that he was God incarnate. Those who deny to Jesus Christ pre-existence to His birth at Bethlehem are those who deny His possession of more than a human nature (Knox,1967: 39).

Incarnation

The Chalcedonian profession of Jesus as true man and true God seems paradoxical. Divinity and humanity constitute and disclose seemingly incompatible ranges of characteristics, for example, eternal and

temporal, omniscience and limited knowledge, omnipotent and limited power. Godwin Nduaguibe notes that "The primary meaning of the doctrine of the Incarnation is that God became human; the Son of God assumed human nature."(2013: 33). Incarnation is perceived as the bringing together and uniting of two contrary and incompatible natures or essences (divine and human) containing within themselves contradictory attributes (for example: omniscience and limited knowledge; omnipotence and limited power).

According to Weinandy (1993:10-11), the Incarnation is not the fusing together of two incompatible natures (divine and human), but the person of the Son coming to exist as man or coming to be man. The union (the incarnating act) is personal (hypostatic) in that it is the bringing into existence a humanity and uniting it to the person of the Son, thus establishing the manner or mode of the Son's existence as man. John Martin Creed notes that "incarnation is not so much a doctrine of the union of Godhead and manhood in a historical person, but is rather to be thought of as the Revelation through the medium of a human personality of the divine eternal word" (1964: 132).

The word "Incarnate" literally from the Latin means, "enfleshment," the taking of humanity. How plainly that fact of Christ's enfleshment is seen in Hebrews 2:14 -"Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil." Nothing could teach plainer the Incarnation of the Christ in literal human flesh life. Kasper's observation must be stated here:

> In the Bible "flesh" means the whole man as bodily constituted. In Greek on the other hand it was easy to understand by "flesh" the body as distinct from the soul or mind. Hence it was very easy to make the mistake of thinking that the logos (the pre-incarnate God) had assumed only human flesh or a human body and not a human soul (Kasper, 2018).

It should be remembered that Greek philosophy was awash with Gnosticism. Christ did not just put on humanity; he became human in fullest. R.L. Sturch (1982:152), asks "can we have any nonsense about being 'man but not a man'"? This is unthinkable to Sturch, Albeit a view held by Docetism. To become flesh does not mean merely to inhabit a human body, like one dwells in a house, for in Genesis 18, Christ appeared unto Abram in human form; but that was not an Incarnation. Baillie's observation is noteworthy here:

> And whenever people find that idea surprising, is it not because they have misunderstanding of the incarnation itself, thinking of it as a mere theophany, by which the Son of God appeared for a short time on earth in the guise of mortal flesh, and then return to heaven, no

> longer human because he never was human except in the sense of inhabiting a human body. That is different from incarnation (1982: 152).

Erickson (1985: 736) states that “For the humanity of Jesus was not the humanity of sinful human beings, but the humanity possessed by Adam and Eve from their creation and before their fall.” God could have given unto Christ an Incarnation apart from “Being born of a woman”, but would it have sufficed for the mission He came to fulfill? God could have created both a body and nature for Christ as He did for Adam, but what relation would such a being have to us? He would be isolated from us, not bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; and, though exactly like ours, would in no sense be generically ours. He would bear no more relationship to us by birth than the angels to Adam. Christ took upon Himself human flesh, so that He partook of the common human nature that was created in the first Adam, and generically passed down through the ages.

All humanity is said to possess the one human nature, and it is of this one human nature of which Jesus partook by being naturally born of a natural human mother. Here is the argument from (Hebrews 2:14-18) - His taking the nature not of angels but of Abraham. II Peter 1:4. Note: In all things to be made like unto His brethren, never lose sight of the fact, Christ was truly human in all points. The only divergence of this fact is stated again and again in the Scriptures. "Yet without sin," but it isn't sin in our natures which makes us human. Adam was a human being before the fall, and we are still human when born again, and shall be human beings yet glorified in Eternity. Sin is not the original, nor is it the essential part of our nature; but rather a perversion and disease permeating all of our nature.

The question, of course, arises, "How could He be born of a human mother, who had a fallen nature, and not be fallen Himself? The Scriptural testimony of His sinlessness is enough if there were no further understanding of the mystery, but there are some other reasons - One: The miraculous conception - The miracle of His birth. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit. This is not the "immaculate conception" of Catholicism which teaches the sinlessness of Mary in order both to explain the sinlessness of Christ and their own Mariolatry. Under the miraculous conception alone is meant that under the workings of the Holy Spirit in the conception of Christ, there was no transmission of natural human fallen nature.

What is more, there is the explanation from the biological teachings of the Old Testament that the lineage or seed is reckoned only from the male line; therefore, the depraved nature is through the male or

father, not the mother. Since Christ had no human father, but that the Holy Spirit was His father, then He did not partake of fallen human nature, but only a human nature from Mary, but sinlessness from the Holy Spirit. In both instances, the Holy Spirit relieved the human nature of the Christ from the disease of sin. Since Christ assumed a human nature that was complete, Christ's body was capable of experiencing everything that is common to human nature (Nduaguibe, 2013: 34). What incarnation explains most is the coming to be of the Hypostasis – the two natures. Therefore, since Christ actually possessed two natures, it is calculable why he behaved finitely on one hand, and behaved infinitely on the other hand.

Evangelical Significance

The hypostasis of Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of a redeemer. The Old Testament believers understood that the Savior whom God promised to send would be God himself. Only God could accomplish the work of crushing the devil's head and delivering sinners from his power, as God promised Adam and Eve (Gen 3:15). Abraham, too, realized that when God said, "Through your off-spring all nations on earth will be blessed" (Gen 22:18), this involved far more than any mere man could do. Abraham understood that God was giving him the promise of a Savior who would obtain the blessing of salvation for all of the human race. Jesus himself tells us that this was Abraham's understanding of God's promise, for he says, "Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). When God revealed to David that he was to be a forefather of the coming Savior and King and then added, "I will be his father, and he will be my son" (2Sam 7:14), David was overwhelmed. He burst into a hymn of thanksgiving and praise (2 Sam 7:18–29). In several psalms that he wrote after receiving this revelation he plainly shows that he fully realized that this Descendant of his would be the Son of God himself. In Psalm 2:7 David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit records the words that God the Father spoke to the Messiah, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." Twice the writer to the Hebrews cites these words from Psalm 2 to establish the deity and authority of Christ (He 1:5; 5:5).

David also wrote Psalm 110, which begins, "The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet" (v. 1). Jesus quotes this verse and asks the Pharisees, "If David then calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?" (Mt 22:45). David recognized that this Descendant of his who was to come would be not only a true man but also true God. In reviewing the evidence from the Old Testament that the promised Messiah would be true God, we cannot fail to mention two familiar and crystal

clear passages from Isaiah. In Isaiah 7:14 we have the great Immanuel prophecy: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel,” a name that means “God with us.” “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Is 9:6).Thus, hypostasis of Christ itself is a correlation of the entire scripture, Old and New Testament. It shows that the Man, Jesus Christ, was really a fulfillment of the coming of God’s taking on humanity – a fulfillment of OT prophecies.

Conclusion

The paper argued Jesus’ full and perfect divinity and humanity; the union of the two in one person; and the relations existing between the two when united in the one person. The understanding of the significances of the hypostasis of Christ is an essential tool in handling the issues that face believers or the church of God. This research has proven that although difficult and life-taking situations abound, Christ who has tasted humanity and has forever identified with men (especially believers) would see them through. Come sicknesses, temptations, devilish attacks, be it whatever may that we pass or/and are passing through, Christ knows and he understands. Again, the paper has demonstrated that the presence of the two natures in Christ makes it righteously just for God to forgive man – for it was also a man that died on behave of man, and also the divine nature of Christ guarantees that the work of Christ would have a wide, far-reaching and lasting effect on all. Its presence did not placate God, but made him forever pleased with man. Only by fully entering into the daily experience of human life (as a man) could Christ be able to intercede meaningfully. He had to undergo the same trials and temptations, and suffer the same exigencies as us. Only by being God could he live without sin, suffer without complaint and intercede with power. The paper then recommend that as a church we should confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same son… perfect in Godhead… perfect in manhood… of one substance with the father in Godhead, of one substance with us in manhood… made known in two natures, of each nature being preserved and concurring in one person and one subsistence. Therefore the humanity of Jesus should be seen as of equal importance to the divinity of Jesus and that man should see himself as the purpose for Christ’s coming. More so, the truth about the hypostatic union of Christ should be taught in the Bible schools, colleges and seminaries so as to enhance church pastors and leaders to know well what to disseminate to their members, which can also be seen as contribution for further study.

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