**Chapter Three: The PERSON of Christ**

**A. Introduction**

1. Jesus Christ is God and he is man; he is one subject, one person, existing in

two natures, divine and human.

a. The oneness of Jesus has always been the presupposition in the

Christian faith regarding the human and divinity of the Lord.

2. After Nicea, the main points of the question was how the divine and human

natures combined in Christ. There were two extreme positions:

a. Monophysitism: the distinction of the natures is not clear at all.

b. Nestorianism: the distinction of the two natures is so clear that it creates

two persons in Jesus.

**B. The Unicity of Christ’s PERSON**

1. Nestorianism and Ephesus:

a. Nestorius argues for *Christotokos* over *Theotokos* while speaking about the

Motherhood of Mary. His principle is that there are two natures in Christ,

two subjects each subsistent in itself and two physical persons: *2 physeis, 2*

*hypostaseis, 2 prosopa.* They are so closely linked that in practice that it is

as if they were only one person, the resuly being a type of “union person.”

b. When Cyril held a Synod in Alexandria in 430 which condemned the teaching

of Nestorius, the emperor Theodosius II called the Council of Ephesus to

resolve the issue. The document that was used to resolve the issue is Cyril’s

*Second letter to Nestorius.*  At the Council, Cyril was deposed from his See

with the approval of Pope Celestine.

c. **Cyril’s Teaching**: Jesus Christ is only one hypostasis and one prosopon. He

who is God is also man through the union of the divine and human nature.

Mary is therefore *Theotokos* because she gave birth to the Word become

Flesh. To the Person of the Word is attributed not only divine actions, but

also the human actions and passions of Jesus.

d. Because of the ambiguity of Cyril’s use of the word one nature (“mia

physis”) as a way of showing the two natures in the one Person, confusion

reigned with the Formulary of Union on 433.

2. The Testimony of the New Testament

a. The New Testament does not give a literal statement on the unity of the

Person of Christ, but it is clear that divine and human actions are

predicated of the one same subject.

b. Passage that highlight the singularity of action is John 1:14, *“The Word*

*became Flesh.”* John 3 reports that Jesus says that “*No one has ascended*

*into the heaven but he who descended from heaven*.”

c. There is also John 17:5, “*Now Father, glorify me in your own presence with*

*the glory which I had with you before the world was made*.”

3. Testimony of the Church Fathers

a. In Tertullian Jesus is seen as two states or natures with no confusion but

united in one Person, God and man.

b. With Gregory of Nazianzen, it is said that in the Savior there were two

different things, but not two individuals.

c. St. Augustine: the same one who is God is man; and the same one who is

man is God, not through the confusion of natures but through the unity of

the Person. It is not until the Council of Chalcedon that the language

becomes truly fixed.

**C. Union and Distinction in Jesus’ Humanity and Divinity**

1. Monophysitism and Chalcedon: there were three ways of explaining

Monophysitism as a heresy. **One** said that the human nature, when assumed by

the divine nature was completely absorbed by it and therefore annihilated. The

**second** view was a divine-human nature exclusive to Christ. The **third** view is

that the Word takes the place of the soul and annihilates it.

a. Eutyches supported the first kind of monophysitism: it asserts that Chrit is a

person of two natures prior to the union, but not in two natures after the

union. This was condemned by pope Leo in his Tome to Flavian in 448 at the

Synod of Ephesus.

b. **Chalcedon Itself**: This definition asserts not only the distinction of the two

natures in Christ, but also the direct consequence of the distinction: the

Hypostatic union was found while preserving intact the property of both

natures (without confusion, division, change or separation.)

c. With the definition it becomes clear that Jesus has two intellects and two

wills. In the NT, Jesus shows his human will to be distinct from the will of

the Father.

d. Jesus possesses the human passions that are perfectly controlled by his

human reason. His passions are termed “propasiones” to show that they

were always motions kept within the sphere of sensibility. Jesus took on

human passions to teach that they are good in themselves and when

controlled by reason, they aid a person in doing good.

e. Everything in Christ’s human nature is to be attributed to his divine person

as to its proper subject.

2. Monothelitism and Constantinople III

a. Monothelites justified their belief by saying that the Fathers taught that in

Christ, the human nature was the instrument of the divinity. Since an

instrument is not moved by one’s own will but by the will of the User, they

concluded that Christ did not have a human will.

b. The Di-thelites, lead by St. Sophronius of Jerusalem and Maximus Confessor,

took a different position. By the council in 681 AD, “*Two natural wills and*

*two active principles inseparably, unchangeably, undividedly and*

*unconfusedly in him and two natural wills, not opposing each other, but his*

*human will following without resistance or reluctance being subject rather*

*to his divine and omnipotent will*.”

c. With St. Thomas, “In Jesus with his human will influenced by human feelings

and his human feelings (voluntas ut natura) sometimes demurred from the

divine will, but entirely subject to it by his human will as it was influenced

by his human reason.(voluntas ut ratio).

d. It was God’s will that Christ should undergo his Passion and death. The

Father desired this to save the human race. But when Christ’s feelings

moved in a way different from what God wanted, with his reasonable human

will, the son desired the same as the Father.

e. Jesus’ “voluntas ut natura” rejected death as something repulsive to human

nature; whereas his “voluntas ut ratio” and the divine will did desrie death

for the sake of the human race.

3. Human actions of God in Christ

a. Since all the actions of Jesus are actions of the divine person, all his human

actions can and should be called actions of God, actions which can properly

be called “theandric.” Thus when Jesus spoke, god was speaking.

b. Jesus did not act as God does, which is divine, nor as man does who is

human, but he showed us a new way of acting, a theandric action.

c. in Christ’s activities, there are exclusively divine actions and human actions.

The latter because they are done by a divine person through his human

nature can be termed theandric. Usually theandric actions are reserved to

human actions of Jesus which are an instrument of the divine activity to

produce effects which surpass human capacity. An example of this kind of

action is seen in his performance of miracles.

d. Everything Jesus did has a transcendent value, because it shows us the

nature of God.

4. The inception of the Incarnation and its permanence.

a. The Hypostatic Union happened the very moment the humanity of Jesus was

conceived and that union never has ceased and never will cease.

b. The conception of humanity and the assumption of humanity of the Word

were simultaneous. The Hypostatic union never ceased, not even at the

passion and death of Jesus. The union of the two natures is forever

inseparable.

c. The incarnation is something definitive. It remains forever. It is appropriate

that the Hypostatic union is definitive because God never takes back his

gifts unless the recipient is at fault and in Jesus there is no sin. Jesus is not

a device for the salvation of mankind. He is himself Salvation.

d. Whereas in the case of ordinary man, the human person is not ontologically

a relationship, in Christ the Person is in a subsistent relationship with the

Father. Jesus’ human nature, because it does not subsist in itself, but exists

through the being of the Son, has no relationship of its own with the Father;

the whole Christ is the natural Son of the Father.

e. Jesus’ human nature has a divine personality. There can be no existing

rational nature which is not a person, not hypostatized in some subject. The

humanity of Jesus lacks nothing, it needs nothing to be constituted a human

person; it is a perfect humanity. (pp. 118).

C. Psychological Unity of the Person

1. If there is a duality of natures and intellects in Christ, one might expect that he

has two self-consciousnesses. But since the “I” is the expression of the person

and since Jesus is only one Person, then he should have only one “I.”

a. However, it is important not to confuse the person with the “I”. The “I” is in

fact not the person, it is the expression of his self-consciousness.

2a. Homo Assumptus: (De basly): Jesus has two “I’s” a human one and a divine

one.

a. Jesus’ humanity would constitute an individual being distinct from the word,

though joined ontologically to him such that while forming one person, the

humanity would be an autonomous subject, with the same autonomy as any

human subject has. He would have a corresponding human “I” counterposed

to divine consciousness..

b. It asserts a psychological division of the person, which is difficult to

reconcile with the truth of faith regarding Christ’s unity.

c. A creature, body or spirit cannot enter into a unity of being with the

Absolute. The assumed man is perfectly autonomous as an agent in such a

way that the Word exercises no influence on his activity. This is really a form

of Nestorianism.

d. while one does not predicate of Christ’s human nature its own finite act of

being, we certainly should predicate of it a formal being of its own, that is

being of human nature.

e. The Person of the Word is what makes the human nature of Jesus exist,

without being limited or circumscribed. It does not mean that divine being

enters into a composition with human nature.

f. There should be something in common between the divine person and human

nature. This something is precisely divine being, which does not form part of

human nature. It is the energy (act) that causes it to exist.

g. It is the word who gives to existence the human nature of Jesus; the

humanity of Christ does not exist on its own, but rather exists in the divine

person. Therefore the human nature of Christ is complete and perfect in

itself and yet it is not a human person; because the subsistence which

constitutes it as a person is really distinct from the nature. It is the word

who causes the human nature to subsist in itself.

h. Not to have a corresponding personhood does not denigrate the human

nature, since it is more worthy to exist in something more noble than to

have an existence of one’s own.

2b. The union is not accidental

a. When it is described that the Word “put on a human nature,” this should no

regard the union of humanity with divinity as accidental. To say that Christ’s

garment is his human nature is an analogous way of saying that Christ

becomes visible through his human nature. The word assumed humanity

without a change as far as his divinity is concerned.

b. For the word of God to dwell in a man, it is not necessary for the Word of

God to become Incarnate.

c. Human nature cannot be accidently united to the word? The fact that Christ

pre-exists from all eternity does not imply that the human nature was

united accidently to him afterwards, for he assumed it in such a way that he

is truly man. Accidents do not confer a substantial formal act.

2c. Theories on the “I” of Christ: How does the humanity of Christ has the Word as

its “I”?

a. Galtier asserts that there are two “I’s” in Christ; but the human “I” knows

that it is not the expression of the human person; it is the human “I” of the

divine person because from the Incarnation Jesus the man had the beatific

vision.

b. Parente asserts that there is only one “I” in Christ, the Divine “I” of the

word known by the divine intellect and human mind of Jesus. The human

mind expresses divine self-consciousness by the Hypostatic Union itself.

c. Galot asserts that there is one “I” in Jesus, which is known not only through

the Hypostatic union, but through a particular mystical experience which

God gave Jesus’ humanity to cause him to know that it was the humanity of

God.

3. Christ has only one “I”. There are New Testament passages where we read that

Jesus speaking as “I” expresses his personal unity as God-man (JN 17:5)

a. “ME” refers to Jesus in humanity. “I” refers to Jesus in his divinity. The me

and the I relate to the same person.

D. Theories about Person and Effects on Christology

1. Gunther and Rosmini: Cartesian Philosophy defines the person not in terms of

autonomy of Being, but in terms of self-consciousness. The person is identical

with the “thinking “I” or the conscious”I.”

a. Locke: substance has no metaphysical quality and it makes no sense to speak

of the soul as a rational substance. The “I” becomes awareness of one’s

identity.

b. The act of knowing shows the quality of self-possession, the perfection of

the nature in which it is sustained.

c. Gunther tries to incorporate this notion of person into Christology. This

would place two consciousnesses into Christ, creating the unity of the

natures in a moral rather than ontological way.

1a. Rossmini: the Hypostatic union is interpreted here in terms of action, not in

terms of being, such that it will never be more than a moral union of wills.

a. Both Gunther and Rossmini have failed to incorporate the modern

psychological concept of person because their concept of person depended

on its spiritual acts (knowing and loving), forgetting that these acts do not

make the person; they proceed from the already constituted person.

b. Both would conclude that Christ is God because God acts in Christ in such a

special way to have taken possession of his human personality; it could not

be said that Christ is God with the full power of identity implied in the verb

“to be.”

2. Karl Rahner’s theory

a. In Christ, given that there are two centers of consciousness, there are two

subjects- divine and human. Jesus human subjectivity is distinct from that of

the Word and t the same time, precisely because in Jesus there is total

openness to the infinite, this subjectivity can receive the total self-giving of

God.

b. With regard to the Father, the man Jesus is situated in a unity of will which

dominates a-prioiri and totally his whole being and in an obedience from

which derives his whole human reality.

c. Jesus is par excellence the one who constantly receives his being from the

Father and who lives surrendered to the Father always and without reserve

in all the dimensions of his existence. In this surrender, he can achieve

within God that which we could never achieve.

d. Jesus is conscious of what he is and he is what he is conscious of. It is the

unity of will that so dominates Christ’s being, hat it actually constitutes it.

By positing two subjects, Rahner can only reach unity on the level of action.

3. Non-Chalcedonian Christologies

a. Schillebeckx: Jesus is a human person, a human person so full of God that

we can say there is a hypostatic identification with him.

b. In the man Jesus, the revelation of the divinity and the opening out of a true

human being, good and genuinely different overlap completely in one unique

and identical person. In the one Person of Jesus, the Godhead is revealed

and the human opens up into the divine.

E. Other Aspects of the Personal Unity of Christ

1. Jesus’ filial relationship to the Father

a. He who was born eternally from the Father and he who was born in the

womb of the Blessed virgin is the Beloved son of the Father.

b. There are not two relationships of divine filiation in Jesus, one natural and

one adoptive. While Jesus is the Father’s Son in a different way from that in

which men are sons of God, the Father is the same in both cases. The

disciples’ filiation is a participation in the filiation of the word.

c. Jesus’ human nature does not have any filiation because filiation is a

relationship of person to person. Being a son is something that belongs to a

person, not a nature.

2. Man’s relationship of Adoration to Christ:

a. Jesus is worshipped through one single form of worship. We do not just

worship the divine nature and ignore the human nature. Adoration is due to

the Person, with everything belonging to him, humanity and divinity.

b. For example, devotion to the Sacred Heart is directed to the heart of the

divine Person, the Word Incarnate and the love God has for us. Stressing

devotion to the Sacred Heart places the certainty of God’s love and the truth

of his commitment to us.

3. Human Language and the Mystery of God

a. “Communicatio Idiomatum”: It is the communicability and reciprocal

interchange of Christ’s divine and human properties.

b. The Person of the Son can be spoken of in words which refer to each nature.

Since the properties of the Holy Humanity are his, the Word claims these

human properties for himself and cause the humanity to share his divine

properties by a mutual exchange.

c. Rules for the communication of idioms

1. Concrete names of one nature and its properties can be predicated of

Christ of the concrete names of the other nature and its properties:

“the Almighty suffered.”

2. Abstract names of one nature cannot be predicated of the concrete

names of the human nature. “Humanity is divinity.”

3. Concrete names cannot be predicated of abstract things. “Humanity is

Eternal.”

4. Abstract names of the divine nature can be predicated of the

concrete names for the human nature. “Jesus Christ is the Deity.”

5. Abstract names of human nature cannot be predicated of concrete

names of the divine nature. “The Son of God is the humanity.”

6. Adjectives of the divine nature cannot be predicated of the concrete

names of the human nature. But adjectives of the human nature can

be predicated of the divine nature. “No- Christ is a deified man.”

“Yes-Christ is the word humanized.”

7. Statements which express “becoming” have to be used with caution:

True: God became man.

False: The man began to exist.