

§ 4. *Consequences of the Hypostatical Union.*

Communion of Attributes.

The first and most obvious of these consequences is, the *koinoia idomaton*, or communion of attributes. By this is not meant that the one nature participates in the attributes of the other, but simply that the person is the *koinonos*, or partaker of the attributes of both natures; so that whatever may be affirmed of either nature may be affirmed of the person. As of a man can be affirmed whatever is true of his body and whatever is true of his soul, so of Christ may be affirmed whatever is true of his human nature and whatever is true of his divinity ; as we can say of a man that he is mortal and immortal ; that he is a creature of the dust and the child of God: so we may say of Christ that He is finite and infinite; that He is ignorant and omniscient; that He is less than God and equal with God ; that He existed from eternity and that He was born in time; that He created all things and that He was a man of sorrows. It is on this principle, that what is true of either nature is true of the person, that a multitude of passages of Scripture are to be explained. These passages are of different kinds.

1. Those in which the predicate belongs to the whole person. This is the most numerous class. Thus when Christ is called our Redeemer, our Lord, our King, Prophet, or Priest, our Shepherd, etc., all these things are true of Him not as the Logos, or Son, nor as the man Christ Jesus, but as the *Theanthropos*, the God-man. And in like manner, when He is said to have been humbled, to have given Himself for us, to be the head of the Church, to be our life, and to be our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, this is true of Christ as a person. The same may be said with regard to those passages in which He is said to be exalted above all principalities and powers; to sit at the right hand of God; and to come to judge the world.

2. There are many passages in which the person is the subject, but the predicate is true only of the divine nature, or of the Logos. As when our Lord said, "Before Abraham was I am;" "The glory which I had with thee before the foundation of the world;" or when it is said, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the world, and the heavens are the work of thine hands."

3. Passages in which the person is the subject, but the predicate is true only of the human nature. As when Christ said, "I thirst;" "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." And when we read that "Jesus wept." So all those passages which speak of our Lord as walking, eating, and sleeping; and as being seen, touched, and handled. There are two classes of passages under this general head which are of special interest. First, those in which the person is designated from the divine nature when the predicate is true only of the human nature. "The Church of God which He purchased with his blood." "The Lord of glory was crucified." The Son knows not the time when the final judgment is to come. (Mark xiii. 32.) The forms of expression, therefore, long prevalent in the Church, "the blood of God," "God the mighty maker died," etc., are in accordance with Scriptural usage. And if it be right to say "God died," it is right to say "He was born." The person born of the Virgin Mary was a divine person. He was the Son of God. It is, therefore, correct to say that Mary was the mother of God. For, as we have seen, the person of Christ is in Scripture often designated from the divine nature, when the predicate is true

only of the human nature. On this particular form of expression, which, from its abuse, is generally offensive to Protestant ears, Turretin remarks: “*Maria potest dici vere theotokos seu Mater Dei, Deipara, si vox Dei sumatur concrete pro toto personali Christi, quod constat ex persona Logou et natura humans, quo sensu vocatur Mater Domini Luc. i. 43, sed non precise et abstracte ratione Deitatis.*”¹ The second class of passages under this head are of the opposite kind, namely, those in which the person is denominated from the human nature when the predicate is true only of the divine nature. Thus Christ is called the Son of man who is in heaven. Here the denomination “Son of man” is from the human, while the predicate (ubiquity) is true only of the divine nature. So our Lord says, “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?” (John vi. 62.) In Romans ix. 5, He who was of the fathers (the seed of Abraham and son of David) is declared to be God over all and blessed forever.

4. There is a fourth class of passages which come under the first general head mentioned above, but have the peculiarity that the denomination is derived from the divine nature, when the predicate is not true of the divine nature itself, but only of the *Theanthropos*. Thus it is said, “The Son also himself shall be subject to him who put all things under him.” Here the designation Son is from the divine nature, but the subjection predicated is not of the Son as such, or of the Logos, nor is it simply of the human nature, but officially of the God-man. So our Lord says, “The Father is greater than I.” The Father is not greater than the Son, for they are the same in substance and equal in power and glory. It is as God-man that He is economically subject to the Father. Perhaps the passage in John v. 26 may belong to this class. “As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” This may be understood of the eternal communication of life from the first to the second person of the Trinity (*i.e.*, of eternal generation); or it may refer to the constitution of Christ’s person. And then the term Son would designate, not the Logos, but the *Theanthropos*, and the communication of life would not be from the Father to the Son, but from God to the *Theanthropos*. It pleased the Father that Christ should have a divine nature possessed of inherent life in order that He might be the source of life to his people.

It is instructive to notice here how easily and naturally the sacred writers predicate of our Lord the attributes of humanity and those of divinity, however his person may be denominated. They call Him Lord, or Son, and attribute to Him, often in the same sentence, what is true of Him only as God, what is true only of his humanity, and what is true of Him only as the God-man. Thus in the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews it is said, God hath spoken unto us by his Son. Here Son means the incarnate Logos. In the next clause, “By whom he made the world,” what is said is true only of the eternal Son. So also what immediately follows, Who is “the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things (the universe) by the word of his power.” But in the next clause, “When he had by himself (*i.e.*, by his sacrificial death) purged away our sins,” the reference is to his human nature, as the body only died. And then it is added, He “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” which is true of the God-man.

1. Locus xviii. quæst v. 18, edit. Edinburgh, 1847, vol. ii. pp. 273, 274.