

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS: TRINITARIAN BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

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I. Introduction: Fully God, Fully Man, One Person, with Two Natures

A. Council of Nicea (A.D. 325)—Fully God

- Condemned Arianism—that Christ was himself a created being
- Affirmed, with Athanasius, that Christ was *homoousios* with the Father

B. Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381)—Fully Man

- Condemned Apollinarianism—that while Christ was fully God, only appeared to be human (Docetism) but was not actually fully human
- Affirmed, with the Cappadocians (Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil of Caesarea) that Christ was both fully God and fully man

C. Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431)—One Person

- Condemned Nestorianism—that Christ was fully God and fully man by being two full persons joined together
- Affirmed that Christ was fully God in nature, and fully man in nature, and so one person with two natures—hypostatic union, i.e., the union of two natures (*ousia*) in one person (*hypostasis*)

D. Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451)—Two Natures

- Condemned Eutychianism—that Christ's two natures co-mingled within him, producing a sort of humanized deity and divinized humanity
- Affirmed that Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, his two natures being conjoined forever together but not confused

II. Trinitarian Structure for Understanding the One God who is Three

A. The Twin Pillars of Trinitarian Doctrine: Distinction and Identity; Difference and Equality

E.g. John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God [distinction], and the Word was God [identity]

B. Trinitarian *Monotheism*: One in Essence

The Christian faith affirms that there is one and only one God, eternally existing while fully and simultaneously expressed in three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each member of the Godhead is equally God, each is eternally God, and each is fully God—not three gods but three Persons of the one Godhead. Each Person is equal in essence as each possesses fully the identically same and eternal divine nature, yet each is also an eternal and distinct personal expression of that one undivided divine nature.

C. *Trinitarian Monotheism*: Three in Persons

Because of this, what *distinguishes* each Person of the Godhead from each other is not and cannot be *the divine nature* of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This—the one and undivided divine nature—is possessed equally, eternally, simultaneously, and fully by each of the three Persons of the Godhead. Therefore, what distinguish each Person of the Godhead from each of the other persons are the identifiable *relationships* that each has with each of the other persons, and the particular *roles* each carries out in relation to the other persons. Both an *equality of*

essence yet differentiation of relationships and roles, then, exist among the persons of the Godhead, so the God of the Bible is fully one (in essence) and three (in persons).

III. The Son as Eternally the Son of the Eternal Father

A. The Son as the Eternal Son, the Incarnate Son, and the Exalted Reigning Son of the Father
I.e., the Son is the Son of the Father in eternity past, in the incarnation, and in eternity future. He is, then, eternally the Son of the eternal Father.

1. **Eternal Son** of the Eternal Father

John 3:16-17 – ¹⁶For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

Galatians 4:4 – But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law

Hebrews 1:1-2 – ¹God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ²in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

1 John 4:9-10 – ⁹By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

2. **Incarnate Son**, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born the God-man of the Virgin Mary

Luke 1:31-35 – ³¹[the angel Gabriel said to Mary,] “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.” ³⁴Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”

John 1:33-34 – ³³[John the Baptist said] “I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴“I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

John 1:49 – Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”

Galatians 2:20 – I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

3. **Raised and Exalted Son**, Ascended and Reigning with the Father over All

Acts 13:32-33 – ³²“And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, ³³ that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.’ [quoting Ps 2:7]

Romans 1:3-4 – ³ concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴ who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord

1 Corinthians 15:27-28 – ²⁷ For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

Hebrews 4:14 – Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

B. As Eternally the Son of the Eternal Father, the Son is always Agent of the Father, under the headship of the Father—in eternity past, in the incarnation, and in eternity future. Consider these texts:

Psalm 2:7-9 – ⁷ I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸ Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.”

John 8:28-29 – ²⁸ So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. ²⁹ And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”

John 8:42 – “. . . I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.”

1 Cor 15:25-28 – ²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be abolished is death. ²⁷ For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

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