



The mystery of the humanity of Christ,
that He sunk Himself into our flesh, is
beyond all human understanding.
- Martin Luther



the
Visionary
THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

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The Evidence for Christ's Full Humanity

Pastor Carl Robbins

Absolutely no one questioned the full humanity of Jesus when He was on earth. All kinds of people saw Him, heard Him speak, touched Him (1 John 1:1) and ate with Him. What was not apparent to many was His full deity. That only became apparent after His death and resurrection.

But, soon after the ascension of Christ the first heresy the church had to address was the notion that Jesus was not fully human, and that is what is being refuted in texts like 1 John 4:2 & 2 John 7.

The struggle to remain absolutely biblical (concerning the Person of Christ) has been ongoing since the first century. It took the church over 400 years to hammer out clear confessional statements, first at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. which fully asserted the Deity of Christ. Then at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. the church completely secured the doctrine of the full humanity of Christ and the Two natures of Christ: Perfectly God and Perfectly Man.

Docetism is the heresy that says Jesus was God, but not human. Ebionism is the heresy that teaches Jesus was a man, but not God.

What do we mean when we say that Jesus is fully human?

We mean that he has a normal human body. John 1:14 ("The Word became flesh") asserts as much. Confessing the "physicalness" of Jesus became one of the first tests of Christian orthodoxy (1 John 4:2, 2 John 7). Jesus was born, like every other person ever (Luke 2:7). He grew and developed normally (Luke 2:40,52). He grew tired after hard work and long days (John 4:6). He got thirsty (John 19:28) and hungry (Matthew 4:2). He became physically weak (Matthew 4:11) and he died (Luke 23:46). And he has a real human body AFTER the resurrection (Luke 24:39, John 20:20,27).

We mean that He has a real human mind. You and I have experienced only one mind and simply cannot fathom what it would be like for one person to have both a human mind AND a Divine mind. A couple of texts push us toward this astounding understanding: Luke 2:52 - *Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.* Mark 13:32 - *Of that day & hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*

What we are being told is that this one glorious person has an infinite, divine mind AND a finite human mind. And Jesus can be said to know all things (John 20:17), because He does possess a divine, infinite knowledge. I could go on stating that Jesus has a real human will (ala John 6:38, Matthew 26:39), but the point is that Jesus is like you in every respect (body, mind, will), except for sin (Hebrews 2:17, 4:15).

Why does it matter? The Sympathy of Jesus: According to Hebrews 4:15, since Jesus IS fully human He can sympathize with us in all our temptations and weaknesses. He was poor, He was despised, He was persecuted and rejected by His family members! He understands exactly the trial you are facing.

The Mediatorial Work of Jesus: Jesus became a man to die for our sins, because our substitute needed to be fully human to take our place. As a descendant of Adam, He was our "blood relation," so He can be our "kinsman redeemer" (Isaiah 59:20). Only a human could shed His blood (Lev. 17:11, Hebrews 9:22) and take away our sins, since the blood of bulls and goats cannot suffice (Hebrews 10:4)

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The Impeccability of Christ

Pastor Dan Dodds

In this issue of the *Visionary* we are considering the humanity of Christ. Numerous questions come to mind when we think about the God-Man, Jesus - such as "what did He know/not know and how is that possible? How did His two natures interact?" In this article, however, we are going to focus on a question that has been the topic of many a debate: when Jesus was on earth, could He have sinned? In theological circles, this is the question of the 'impeccability' of Christ. Impeccability comes from the Latin word 'peccare' which means 'to sin.' Thus 'impeccability' refers to Jesus' inability to sin.

Here's where it gets tricky. On the one hand, we read verses such as James 1:13, "*Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*" We believe that Jesus is God; therefore, this verse suggests that Jesus cannot be tempted to sin and, as such, could not sin. On the other hand, we read Hebrews 4:15, "*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*"

How do we resolve this apparent contradiction? We know that God does not lie and He does not contradict Himself. So, if we are going to resolve this question, we must begin by understanding that the text is not telling us 'Jesus was tempted' and 'Jesus was not tempted' where the terms are the same in meaning and relationship. We will need to dig deeper. One author provides a helpful set of propositions as follows:

- 1) If Jesus' human nature had existed by itself He would have had a nature like ours and therefore been able to sin.
- 2) Jesus' human nature never existed apart from His divine nature.

- 3) Although there are some things that Jesus experienced in His human nature alone (e.g. hunger), if He had sinned, it appears it would have involved both of His natures, human and divine.
- 4) If Jesus sinned as one Person with two natures, then His divine nature would have sinned, which is impossible.
- 5) Therefore, we must say that the union of His two natures would make His sinning impossible.

Grudem suggests that Jesus' temptations were nonetheless real because He resisted them in His human nature rather than relying upon His divine nature.

Another writer provides this illustration. A man is swimming across Lake Michigan and is followed by a boat which is there to pick him up if he begins to drown. So, if the man makes it across the lake, why didn't he drown? Because he was swimming. But at the same time, he *could not* have drowned because the lifeboat was there to save him.

Jesus was tempted like we are because His human nature would have been drawn to give in to the temptations. If He was about to sin, His divine nature would have prevented Him from doing so. But Jesus chose not to rely on His divine nature to not sin. In so doing, He represented a true new Adam but One who resisted the temptation and secured righteousness for us.

Who ever said theology was easy?

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The Sympathy of Christ

Pastor Scotty Anderson

If you don't count the humanity of your Savior a precious doctrine, then I might question whether you understand anything of our religion. It is among the dearest of truths that we possess because it is both central doctrine and essential comfort. And it is unique. Of the great world religions, both present and past, the quality of sympathy is, at best, incidental, if not wholly absent. There are views of a god who has a general sort of benevolence to all or some and there are encouragements to exercise compassion. But for those who know God through His Self-revelation, sympathy is hardly incidental. It is central; a frequently disclosed facet of the character of our God. And what is unique in our religion is that a wholly other Creator does not express a mere interest in the well-being of His creation but is actually pained over the plight of the creatures He made (Ps 33:18; 103:18-22; 106:44). Nowhere is that revelation made clearer than in God the Son and His earthly ministry.

Think about how common it was for Christ to express His concern for the particular condition of those near to Him as well as for those far away. In Matthew 9:36 (cf. Mk 6:34), He expresses concern for their lostness: *"He moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd."* He is concerned for their physical maladies: for the sick (Mt 14:14), for the blind (Mt 20:34), and for the leper (Mk 1:41). The broken physical state of man that issues from Adam's fall in the Garden is not status quo for Jesus but a real source of pain and an emotion that moves Him to act for them. He is also concerned for their simple daily needs as in Matthew 15:32 when He shares His own feelings with His disciples: *"I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat.*

And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." He even feels hurt over their hurt as we read in Luke 7:13, *"When the Lord saw her (the widow who lost her son), He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep'."*

Jesus' compassion is not confined to His earthly ministry. In His parting words to His disciples in the Upper Room Discourse, He prayed: *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."* (Jn 17:20-21) And the image we have of Christ in glory is that He does not cease to have compassion on those who are His. In Rev 2:9, Jesus identifies with the church in Smyrna, *"I know your works, tribulation, and poverty..."* To the Church in Thyatira He says, *"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience."* (Rev 2:18) Over and over the picture from heaven is of concern for those who are loyal to the Lamb; that even though they suffer, they are not forgotten and they will receive their comfort in the time to come (Rev 7:15-17; 11:18b; 14:12-13).

This is the nature of our Lord Jesus, who, though fully God, remains fully human. His sympathy is real and comes from true emotions perfectly oriented toward the right objects. This sympathy is among His most exalted qualities. When the preacher of Hebrews wanted to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus to angels, Moses, the temple, the Torah, priests, and all rivals, he pointed to this quality: *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."* (Hebrews 4:15) We are reminded in Hebrews 5:1-2 that the priests of the Old Covenant were taken from among men so that as they exercised their office they could be sympathetic since they knew their own failures

and limitations. However, they frequently failed in this. Not so with Jesus. And, His unflinching sympathy produces a real and immediate benefit to you: *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16).

The Gospel stories, the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, even the Spirit Himself, bear witness to the fact that Jesus lacks no humanity but has a real sympathy for those who are His. He knows you and you are precious to Him. Consider the word of Jesus in the waning hours of His earthly ministry: *“Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”* (Jn 13:33-35). And then He says, *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also”* (Jn 14:1-3). And then, *“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you”* (Jn 14:16-17). And finally, *“I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you”* (Jn 14:18).

Your Savior is no indifferent deity. He’s not the distant Allah. He bears none of the marks of caprice you find in the Greco-Roman Pantheon. There’s none of the sinister side of the Brahma. He doesn’t have the inscrutability of the Great Spirit of the Native American religions. Jesus

reveals Himself. He reveals Himself as near and as caring deeply about those who are His. He cares about you; and because he so obviously and straightforwardly cares, you can be sure that your prayers are attended to, His mercies will continue to be new, and you will never cease to be loved and have a family and a home, both now and forever.

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*“And the Word became
flesh and dwelt among us,
and we beheld His glory,
the glory as of the only
begotten of the Father, full
of grace and truth.”*

JOHN 1:14

New Members & Baptisms



Chad & Kelly Warner

Membership Vows

May 28, 2017

With children

Sidney & Elodie

tyed, Covenant Children

Zachary & Jocelyn Groff

Membership Vows

May 28, 2017

With children

Zoe, Abigail & Judah



What They're Reading

Recommended Reading from the Pastoral Staff

Pastor Robbins

I have been reveling in Ben Sasse's *The Vanishing American Adult*. Dr. Sasse, a former college president, is a US Senator from Nebraska where he is a member of a PCA congregation. This is one of the most important books I've read in the last few years on the subject of parenting and dealing with the problem of "failure to launch" (adult kids who don't make their way into adult responsibilities).

A must-read biography is Faith Cook's *Anne Bradstreet: Pilgrim and Poet*. I recently quoted Mrs. Bradstreet in a sermon on marital love. Anne Bradstreet was a Pilgrim who came to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1600's and bore and raised eight children despite all manner of physical handicaps and difficulties. I know of no other author (prose or poetry) who is more deeply saturated in Scripture and reformed theology. The reader is repeatedly moved by her understanding of God's Providence in the daily affairs of life.

I am always looking for good, accessible treatments of the Person and work of Christ and *Knowing Christ* (the new Banner of Truth book by Mark Jones) fits the bill. Jones walks thru 27 aspects of the life and ministry of Jesus and does so with richness and biblical fidelity. I even found myself using these brief chapters (no more than ten pages each) as devotional reading!

Okay, I am officially the slowest guy in the room. Pastor Dodds and Pastor Anderson both told me I would appreciate Emerson Eggerichs' *Love and Respect*. So, after procrastinating for several months, I finally read it, and I found this book immensely helpful. It clearly describes dozens of struggling couples I've known and/or counseled. Eggerichs' exegesis of Ephesians 5:33 and his description of "The Crazy Cycle" are worth the price of the book.

Pastor Dodds

Oneida: From Free Love Utopia to the Well-Set Table, Ellen Wayland-Smith. Ever hear of Oneida silverware? Did you know that it originated in a free love sect during the early nineteenth century? I was particularly interested in the theological pathology of John Noyes, the founder: a combination of individualistic interpretation and eschatological error. Although correctly understanding that there will not be any marriage in heaven, Noyes applied bad interpretation and an over-realized eschatology to justify 'free love' among his followers; it did not end well.

The Light Princess, George MacDonald. Though MacDonald's stories can be somewhat strange, I really enjoy his writing style.

Fairy Tales Every Child Should Know, Hamilton Wright Mabie. Free on Kindle, I picked this up for when I cannot sleep. It includes a lot of the classics, even some without the Disney 'spin' that can be rather unsettling!

Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible, Stephen Dempster. Another book in the series *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, this fascinating metanarrative of the Bible looks at the story of Scripture through the perspective of the Hebrew arrangement of the books of the Old Testament.

Eve in Exile, Rebekah Merkle. Merkle shows the reader that a return to the Victorian age or to the 1950's is not the answer to the postmodern erasing of the categories that once provided structure to society and gender. She provides a biblical paradigm for womanhood that is helpful and practical in this wonderful little book on "the restoration of femininity."

In the Beginning: Compelling Evidence for Creation and the Flood, Walt Brown, Ph.D. This thorough, scientifically oriented resource book was the 2001

Minutes of the Session

edition and so will have outdated science or will not deal with new scientific paradigms, but was a good volume nonetheless.

Baptism's Beauty and Benefits, David Rountree. With a reformed perspective on baptism, this great book is theologically rich and practical while still being easy to read.

Pastor Anderson

My lead book was a first. *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* by Gregory Koukl is not the first book I've read on apologetics, but it is the first recommended to me by my own son. Over the years, I've read a lot of books on apologetics so, needless to say, I was not especially enthused to read another. But, I read it anyway, and was greatly humbled when I got into it. It's fantastic and is exactly what it says it is: not principles of apologetics (though the foundation is in there) but real, verbal, hand-to-hand technique. I highly recommend it, especially if you've gotten the foundation through Pastor Dodds' classes.

Another book I've enjoyed comes from a leading evangelical scholar, Craig L. Blomberg. I've appreciated many (not all) of his books and commentaries over the years. In particular, one of his newer scholarly works, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions*, has proved to be a useful contribution. Pastor Robbins managed to simplify and apply this in a recent sermon and Blomberg confirms that your pastor was on the mark. Blomberg accumulates a mountain of biblical evidence in his survey from Genesis to Revelation as he makes it clear that generosity is a vital element that Scripture would have us exercise whether we have much or little.

I just started Ben Sasse's *The Vanishing American Adult*. It's great already. I'll provide an update later.

In May, your elders met for a regular monthly meeting as well as for called meetings to receive members and counsel members. Please continue to pray for the Lord to raise up additional elders to serve His Church here at WRPC. Also, as you pray, think about who you will nominate for elder this December as we enter our biennial cycle of nominating, training, and electing officers. Although we know the Lord will provide men to rule His Church, you are the means He will use to make known which men he is calling to this office.

Administration

Received regular reports from the Treasurer on church finances. Accepted, with sadness at his departure and thankfulness for his service, the resignation of Joe Lambert from the Session. Directed the Diaconate to resolve various issues related to the distribution of excess food on Wednesday night and on management of benevolence needs in the congregation (see Acts 6).

Presbytery and General Assembly

Received a report on the Spring meeting of Calvary Presbytery. TEs Robbins, Dodds, and Anderson and REs Mayfield, Scott, and Johnson attended. Discussed issues in preparation for the 45th General Assembly.

Missions

Received a report from TE Kona on his mission work in Albania.

Membership

Received Mr. Quentin Salinas and Miss Rachel Salinas as communing members based on their profession of faith and assigned them to the Marcinak shepherding group. Received Mr. and Mrs. Chad Warner as communing members based on their reaffirmation of faith, along with children Sydney and Elodie as non-communing members.

Shepherding Matters

Met with and prayed for Mrs. Joseph Pipa in advance of her surgery. Met with a member to administer the censure of admonition and to encourage, warn, and counsel the member to continue to bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

Pulpit Planner for July-August 2017

AM Sermons

- July 2** Pastor Robbins continues the series in 2 Timothy by preaching on “Covenant Faith and the Role of Mothers” from 2 Timothy 1:5
- July 9** Pastor Anderson resumes the study of Ecclesiastes (Chapter 3) by looking at “The Limits of Justice”
- July 16** Pastor Dodds preaches Mark 13, “The Return of the Son of Man in Glory”
- July 23** Pastor Robbins expounds 2 Timothy 1:6-8, focusing on “Putting Off Fear and Shame”
- July 30** The Sovereignty of God in salvation is in view as Pastor Robbins unpacks 2 Timothy 1:9, “He Called Us”
- August 6** 2 Timothy 1:10 and “The Abolition of Death” is the focus of Pastor Robbins’ exposition
- August 13** The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be served after Pastor Robbins preaches on “The Believers Speech and Suffering” from 2 Timothy 1:11-12
- August 20** Pastor Robbins preaches 2 Timothy 1:13-14, “Holding Tightly to Truth”
- August 27** 2 Timothy 1:15-18 is the subject of Pastor Robbins’ exposition, “How to Pray for Apostates”

PM Sermons

- July 2** Mr. Tony Rogers leads the study of Mark 14, preaching on “The Blasphemy of the Son of Man”
- July 9** Pastor Dodds examines Mark 13, studying “Tribulation”
- July 16** Mr. Jon Dorton preaches Galatians 1, focusing on “A Counterfeit Gospel”
- July 23** Pastor Robbins introduces “God’s Wisdom,” an expository mini-series on Proverbs, with “Found in Proverbs and in Christ”
- July 30** Pastor Robbins expounds Proverbs 4:23 as he studies “God’s Wisdom (2): Keeping the Heart”
- August 6** Proverbs 1:7 is the focus of Pastor Robbins’ sermon, “God’s Wisdom (3): The Fear of the Lord”
- August 13** Pastor Robbins continues studying Proverbs with “God’s Wisdom (4): Seeking and Heeding Counsel”
- August 20** “The Fool” is the focus of Pastor Robbins’ exposition of “God’s Wisdom (5)”
- August 27** Pastor Robbins continues the mini-series on Proverbs as he preaches “God’s Wisdom (6): The Tongue”

Treasurer's Report

WRPC uses a fiscal year for budgeting purposes that runs April through March. Our budgeted revenues and expenses for fiscal 2017/2018 are \$1,200,947.00. Other important numbers to report are that our total cash on hand is \$326,000 (three months of operating expenses) and our renovation loan balance is approximately \$670,000.

If you have any questions about our finances please contact Will Zettler or Eddie Roberts.

Below is the financial report through May 2017.

WOODRUFF ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH					
May 2017					
Accounts	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	YTD Budget Remaining	Fav / Unfav	Total Year Budget
Total Revenues	\$ 212,737	\$ 200,000	\$ (12,737)	Fav	\$ 1,200,000
Total PERSONNEL	\$ 97,396	\$ 100,006	\$ 2,610	Fav	\$ 600,037
Total IN HOUSE MINISTRIES	\$ 10,464	\$ 11,806	\$ 1,342	Fav	\$ 70,835
Total FACILITY AND OPERATIONS	\$ 41,388	\$ 46,233	\$ 4,846	Fav	\$ 277,400
Total MISSIONS	\$ 40,126	\$ 42,633	\$ 2,508	Fav	\$ 252,675
Total Expenses	\$ 189,373	\$ 200,678	\$ 11,305	Fav	\$ 1,200,947
Net Total	\$ 23,363	\$ (678)	\$ (24,042)	Fav	\$ (947)

Along with the new playground which was recently installed, the deacons have several ongoing and upcoming building projects and are always open to designated giving. Some of these projects and needed items are listed below:

- ◆ Steeple Repair
- ◆ New choir chairs
- ◆ New floor cleaning machine
- ◆ Upgraded security cameras
- ◆ Upgraded sanctuary cameras

If you are looking to serve and want to find a place to plug-in and help out with our facilities, please ask a deacon and we can get you involved.

*“That which was from the beginning,
which we have heard, which we have seen
with our eyes, which we have looked upon,
and our hands have handled, concerning
the Word of life – ”*

1 JOHN 1:1



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