

# The Nature of the Redeemer's Humanity

by J.C. Philpot

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*The sermon explores the nature of the Redeemer's humanity, emphasizing its real and substantial nature, assumed by the Son of God, and its intrinsic holiness and purity.*

**Scripture:** John 10:17, John 17:17, Acts 13:37, Romans 8:3, Philippians 2:7, 1 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 2:14, Hebrews 10:5

**Topics:** "Christology", "Incarnation"

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## Description

J.C. Philpot preaches on the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ, emphasizing the eternal purpose of the Father to glorify His Son through the incarnation. The sermon delves into the depths of God's wisdom, power, and love displayed in the union of the divine Son with human flesh to manifest grace, love, and glory. It highlights the importance of understanding the truth of God manifest in the flesh for godliness, salvation, and sanctification, as revealed in the mystery of the incarnate God. The sermon explores the real and substantial human nature of Jesus, impeccability, incorruptibility, and immortality of His sacred humanity, emphasizing the voluntary sacrifice and the unity of His two natures in one Person.

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## Transcript

Chapter Two from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

To glorify his dear Son has from all eternity been the purpose of the Father; and both in the plan and in the execution has he manifested the depths of his infinite wisdom, power and love. That the eternal Son of God should take into intimate and indissoluble union with his divine Person the flesh and the blood of the children, that in that nature he might manifest the riches of the sovereign grace, the heights and depths of the everlasting love, and the fullness of the uncreated glory of a Triune Jehovah, has been from all eternity the determinate counsel and purpose of the great and glorious self-existent I AM; and all creation, all providence, and all events and circumstances of time and space were originally and definitely arranged to carry into execution this original plan. Creation, with all its wonders of power and wisdom, was not necessary either for the happiness or the glory of the self-existent Jehovah. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost had, from all eternity, that holy, intimate union and intercommunion with each other, that mutual love and ineffable fellowship of three distinct Persons and yet but one God, which creation could neither augment nor impair. Time, with all its incidents, is but a moment-, space, with all its dimensions, is but a speck, compared with the existence of a God who inhabiteth eternity, and therefore filleth all time and all space. That a self-existent God should be amply sufficient for his own happiness and his own glory is a truth as self-evident to a believing heart as the very existence of God himself. But it pleased the sacred Triune

Jehovah that there should be an external manifestation of his heavenly glory; and this was to be accomplished by the incarnation of the Son of God, the second Person of the holy Trinity. The Father, therefore, prepared him a body, which in due time he should assume. Thus addressing his heavenly Father, he says, "A body has, thou prepared me." (Heb. x. 5.) That he should take this prepared body into union with his divine Person was the eternal will of God; so that when the appointed time arrived for the decree to be accomplished, the eternal Son could and did come forth from the bosom of the Father with these words upon his lips, -Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me (the volume of God's eternal decrees), to do thy will, O God." (Heb. x. 7.)

Now, the word of truth declares that "God manifest in the flesh" is "the great mystery of godliness." (I Tim. iii. 16.) Therefore, without an experimental knowledge of this great mystery there can be no godliness in heart, lip, or life; and if no godliness no salvation, unless we mean to open the gates of bliss to the ungodly, who "shall not stand in the judgment;" (Psa. i. 5;) and to count for nothing that .. "ungodliness" against which "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven." (Rom. i. 18.) It is the truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus," which alone "maketh free;" and it is the truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus," which alone sanctifies as well as liberates: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." (John xvii. 17.) How important, then, how allestential to know the truth for ourselves, in our own hearts and consciences, by divine teaching and divine testimony, that, set free from bondage, darkness, ignorance, and error, liberated into the blessed enjoyment of the love and mercy of God, and sanctified by his Spirit and grace, we may walk before him in the light of his countenance. And as in the Person of the incarnate Son of God "are hid all the treasures of wisdom-and knowledge." how blessed is it to look up by faith to him at the right hand of the Father, and to receive out of his fullness those communications of wisdom and grace which not only enlighten us with the light of the living, but cause us to be partakers of his holiness, and thus make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

As thus taught and blessed, we desire to approach this solemn subject, and to look with the eyes of an enlightened understanding and of a believing heart at the mystery of an incarnate God. And if Moses at God's command put off his shoes from off his feet, when he looked at the burning bush. for the place whereon he stood was holy ground, (Exod. iii. 5,) much more should we, when we look on the mystery of God made manifest in the flesh. of which the burning bush was but a type, put off the shoes of carnal reason from off our feet.

The sacred humanity of the blessed Lord consists of a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, taken at one and the same instant in the womb of the Virgin Mary, under the overshadowing operation and influence of the Holy Ghost. This is very evident from the language of the angel to the Virgin: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke i. 35.)

1. The first thing to be borne in mind is, that it was a real and substantial human nature, consisting of a real human body and a real human soul, both of which were assumed at one and the same instant in the womb of the Virgin. It was necessary that the same nature should be taken which had sinned, or there could have been no redemption or reconciliation of that nature, or of those that wore that nature. Thus the apostle argues, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham;" (Heb. ii. 16;) implying, that if fallen angels had to be redeemed and reconciled, the Son of God must have taken angelic nature; but as man had to be redeemed, he assumed human nature. It was not, then, a shadowy form which the son of God assumed in the womb of the Virgin, as he had appeared in human shape before his incarnation to Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, Manoah and his wife, but a real human

nature, as real, as substantial as our own.

Thus the Son of God "took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;" (Phil. ii. 7;) "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" (John i. 14;) "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh-," (Rom. viii. 3;) "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." (Heb. ii. 14.) These Scripture testimonies abundantly show that the Son of God assumed a real human nature, but not a fallen, peccable, mortal nature. He was "made flesh," therefore real flesh; "in the likeness of sinful flesh," therefore not in the reality of sinful flesh. He took flesh of the Virgin, or he could not have been the promised "seed of the woman," which was to bruise the serpent's head; (Gen. iii. 15;) or of "the seed of Abraham," to which the promise was especially made, (Gal. iii. 16,) and from whom the Virgin Mary was lineally descended. And this nature he so assumed, or to use a scriptural expression, so "took hold of," (Heb. ii. 16, marg.) that it became his own nature as much as his divine nature is his own. It was not assumed, as a garment, to be laid aside after redemption's work was done, but was taken into indissoluble union with his divine Person. Nor did his death on the cross dissolve this union, for though body and soul were parted, and his immortal, incorruptible body lay in the grave, his soul was in paradise, in indissoluble union with his Deity. Thus, as each of us is really and truly man, by human nature being so personally and individually appropriated by us as our own subsistence, that it is as much ours as if there were no other partaker of it on earth but ourselves; so the Son of God, by assuming that nature which is common to all men, (therefore called "the flesh and blood of the children,") made it his own as much as ours is our own nature. He is, therefore, really and truly "the man Christ Jesus." (I Tim. ii. 5.)

2. , The next thing to be believed in and held fast is, that this humanity was not a person, but a nature. This point may not seem at the first glance of deep and signal importance; but as all God's ways and works are stamped with infinite wisdom, it will be seen, on deeper reflection, that it involves matters of the greatest magnitude - of the richest grace and the highest glory. For look at the consequences which would necessarily follow, were the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord a person and not a nature. Were it a person, the Lord Jesus Christ would be two Persons, one Person as God, and another Person as man, and thus would be two distinct individuals. But being a nature, which had of itself no distinct individuality, but was assumed at the very instant of its conception into union with his divine Person, the Lord Jesus is still but one Person, though he possesses two distinct natures. The angel, therefore called it "that holy thing" i.e., that holy nature, that holy flesh, that holy substance - a "thing," because it had a real substance, "holy," because not begotten by natural generation, but sanctified in the moment of conception by the Holy Ghost, so as to be intrinsically holy, impeccable, immortal - capable of dying, but not tainted with the seeds of sickness or death. It was not a body like ours, "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin;" (Psa. li. 5;) but was begotten by a divine and supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, and was therefore "holy," not relatively, and partially, as we, but really, thoroughly, and intrinsically holy; "harmless," or as the word might be rendered, "free from all ill;" "undefiled" with any taint of corruption in body or soul, original or actual, in any seed, inclination, desire, feeling, or movement of or toward it; "separate from sinners" in its conception and formation, in every thought, word, or deed, so that it was as separate from sin, and sin as separate from it, when on earth as it is now in the presence of God; "and made higher than the heavens," by the exaltation of that human nature to the throne of glory; higher than the visible heavens, for what is the glory of sun, moon, or stars to the glory of the sacred humanity of Christ in the courts of heaven? and higher too than the invisible heavens, for in his human nature as the God-man, he is exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. (Heb. vii. 26; Eph. i. 20-22).

Among the heresies and errors which pestered the early church, was the Nestorian heresy, which asserted that Christ's human nature was a Person, and thus made two persons in the Lord, and the Eutychian, which declared that there was but one nature, the humanity of Christ being absorbed into his divinity. Against both these errors the Athanasian Creed, that sound and admirable compendium and bulwark of divine truth, draws its two-edged sword: "Who, although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; one not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the Manhood into God; one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person; for as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." The Nestorian heresy is cut to pieces by the declaration that "he is not two," (i.e. persons,) but one Christ; and the Eutychian by the words, "one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person."

But consider the blessings that are connected with and flow out of this heavenly truth. The glory and beauty of this mystery, it is true, can only be seen and known by faith; for faith, as "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," alone gives to these divine realities a substantial existence in the believer's heart. But looking by faith into this heavenly mystery, we may see in the two points we have thus far touched upon signal beauty and blessedness. The human nature which the blessed Lord assumed into union with his divine Person hungered, thirsted, was weary, wept, sighed, groaned, sweat drops of blood, agonised in the garden and on the cross, was tried, deserted, tempted, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, and, by a voluntary act, died. Had it not been a real human nature, the sufferings and sorrows of the holy soul, the pains and agonies of the sacred body, the obedience rendered, the blood shed, the sacrifice offered, the life laid down would not have been real, at least not really endured and offered in that very nature which was to be redeemed and reconciled. This is beautifully unfolded by the apostle: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb. ix. 17, 18.)

But again, were the human nature of our blessed Lord a Person, its acts would have been personally distinct, and the virtue and validity of Deity would not have been stamped upon them. We may thus illustrate the distinction between a nature and a person. Man and wife are mystically by marriage one flesh, but they still remain two distinct persons. Their acts, therefore, as persons, are individually distinct, and each is morally and really responsible for his or her individual actions. But were they so incorporated, like a grafted tree, as to become two natures and only one person, then the acts of the weaker nature, assuming for the moment that the female is the weaker, being the acts of one and the same person, would be stamped with all the strength and power of the stronger. Thus it is with the two natures of our blessed Lord. The human nature, though essentially and intrinsically holy, impeccable, incorruptible, and immortal, being the weaker and inferior nature, yet becomes stamped with all the worth, virtue and validity of the divine nature, because though there are two natures there is but one Person. Thus the grand, vital truth of the two natures yet but one Person of the glorious Immanuel is no mere dry or abstract doctrine, no speculative theory spun out of the brains of ancient fathers and learned theologians, but a blessed revelation of the wisdom and grace of God.

3. But much beauty and heavenly glory are wrapped up in the way in which that humanity was assumed. In the forming of this holy humanity we see the three Persons of the blessed Trinity engaged. The Father prepared the body, the Son assumed it, the Holy Ghost formed it. By the preparation of the body, as the act of the Father, we understand not its actual forming or framing in the womb of the Virgin, but its eternal

designation, its preparation in the council, wisdom, and love of the Father. "A body hast thou prepared me;" (Heb. x. 5;) margin, "thou hast fitted me," literally, "put together joint by joint." To design, to contrive, to put together in his own eternal mind, not merely the framework of the Lord's body and the constitution of his soul, but so to prepare it that, conceived in the womb of the sinful Virgin, it should not partake of her sin, of her fall, of her sickness, of her corruptibility - this was a greater wonder to appear in heaven than what holy John saw in vision. (Rev. xii. 1.)

This body, thus prepared, the eternal Son of God assumed. By its assumption by the Son we understand not a creating act, as if the Son of God himself created the body to be assumed, but that ineffable act of condescension and grace whereby he took at one and the same instant of its formation, that sacred humanity, consisting of a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, into union with his divine Person. We say "at one and the same instant," for we reject with abhorrence that vain figment, that idle tale, that pestilential and dangerous error of the preexistence of the human soul of the Lord Jesus. He was made in all things like unto his brethren, sin only excepted; (Heb. ii. 17; iv. 15;) and unless it can be proved that our soul was created before our body, and pre-existed ages before it, it cannot be shown that the human soul of the Lord Jesus had any such pre-existence.

This human nature, prepared by God the Father, and assumed by God the Son, God the Holy Ghost formed. By the forming of that sacred humanity by the Holy Ghost we understand that act of miraculous power whereby he overshadowed the Virgin by his operations and influence, and created, of her flesh, a holy human nature, which he sanctified and filled with grace in the very instant of its conception.

4. But this leads us onward to a fourth point, not less full of truth and blessedness. And we may put it in the form of a solemn question. How was it possible that in a nature so prepared, so assumed, and created, there could be any taint of sin, corruption, disease, or mortality? The Father contemplated that human nature which he had prepared for his dear Son from all eternity with ineffable complacency and delight. Could he who made man in his original creation so pure and innocent, creating him in his own image, after his own likeness, have prepared for his own Son, his onlybegotten, eternal Son, a body fallen, tainted, and corruptible, or even capable of corruption and decay? Could the Son, who is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Person," assume into union with his eternal Godhead any other but a pure, holy, immortal, and incorruptible nature? It was not a body to decay with sickness and die of disease, and then be thrust away out of sight as the food of corruption, but taken into intimate union with Deity itself, as its immortal and incorruptible companion. Could the Holy Ghost form anything but a holy nature for the Son of God to assume into a union so close, intimate, and indissoluble?

But it may not be unprofitable to examine these points of divine truth a little more closely.

i. And first, as to the intrinsic holiness and purity of the Lord's human nature. It was essentially a nature impeccable, that is, not only not tainted with sin, but absolutely incapable of being so tainted. As we read of its being "impossible for God to lie," (Heb. vi. 18,) so we may say of the sacred humanity of the blessed Lord, it was impossible it could sin. The testimonies in the word of truth are most full and clear to the impeccability of the human nature of the blessed Lord. "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." (2 Cor. v. 2 1.) He knew no sin; that is, in his own Person, in its taint or defilement or in any approach thereunto. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." (John xiv. 30.) Satan, the prince of this world, came to tempt and to assail him; but he had nothing in him, as he has in us; that is, no internal material on which to work. If we may use such a figure, he had no ground within the walls on which to plant his infernal artillery. He might assault the blessed Lord from without, for "in all points he was tempted

like as we are, yet without sin," which had neither birth nor being, root nor stem, nor the possibility of any, in the sacred humanity of the adorable Redeemer.

The late Dr. Cole, in a work published many years ago,\* has exposed, in the most clear and forcible manner, the awful blasphemies of the once popular Edward Irving\*\* on this point. Well may we call them "awful blasphemies," for Dr. Cole declares that he heard with his own ears this poor, miserable, ranting orator, for he called his own sermons "Orations," term the holy humanity of the blessed Lord, "that sinful substance." The sacred beauty, the ineffable blessedness of that holy humanity mainly consisted in the Lord's being "a lamb without blemish and without spot," (I Pet. i. 19) as was typified by the paschal lamb, (Exod. xii. 5,) and indeed by every other ceremonial sacrifice. (Lev. xxii. 19-24; Deut. xv. 21.) We must never lose sight of the peculiar nature of the blessed Lord's humanity. The nature of Adam was peccable, that is, capable of sinning, because, though created pure, it was not generated by any supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost. It was a pure created nature, but not a holy begotten nature. The two things are essentially distinct. Besides which, the humanity of Adam was a person, and therefore could fall; but the humanity of Jesus is a nature taken into union with his divine Person, and therefore could no more sin or fall away from Godhead than his Godhead, could sin or fall off from his manhood.

ii. It was therefore incorruptible. The body of the blessed Redeemer lay three days and nights, according to the Jewish mode of calculation, in the sepulchre, but it knew no corruption. As the apostle expressly declares, "He whom God raised again saw no corruption." (Acts xiii. 37.) The sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus had no seeds in it of decay. Though a real body, like our own, though it ate and drank and slept as we do, not being under the original curse, nor involved in the Adam fall, it was not subject to sickness or corruption, as our body is. The voluntary death of the blessed Lord severed for a while body and soul; but the body was no more tainted with corruption in the sepulchre than the soul was tainted with sin in paradise.

iii. This sacred humanity of the adorable Lord was therefore essentially immortal. The body of the Lord was capable of death; indeed, as dying was the main part of every sacrifice, it was taken that it might die. It did not die from inherent necessity, as our bodies die, which are essentially mortal, because involved in Adam's transgression; but it died by a voluntary act. This is most plain from the Lord's own words, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John x. 17, 18.) It was not the pain of the cross, the nails driven through the hands and feet, the exhaustion of nature, or the agony of soul that killed', so to speak, the Lord Jesus. When he had finished the work which his Father gave him to do, so that he could say, "It is finished," "he bowed his head" - the head did not decline of itself, weighed down by death, but he himself, full of life and immortality, bowed it; and then, by a voluntary act, "gave up the ghost," or breathed out his life.

We conclude with an extract from Dr. Cole's book:

The awful and inevitable consequences of applying this term 'mortal' to the body of Christ. "if the body of Christ was 'mortal' in the unalterable meaning of that term. his death, as we have already hinted. was not voluntary but of necessity. He did not die of his own free will. but died, because, being a personal sinner. (tremble my soul at the thought!) he could not save himself from death! He had no power to 'lay down' his life. but was compelled to yield it up. because he had forfeited it by his own sins! He did not 'give his life a ransom for many-, but the just judgments of God took it from him for his own transgressions,; 'The soul

that sinneth it shall die.' (Ezck. xviii. 4.)

"But is this the truth as it is in Jesus Christ? Is this the doctrine concerning the adorable Person of the Son of God that is revealed in the Word! Is this the instruction which the Holy and Blessed Spirit seals upon the heart of the redeemed? No. no! The scriptures declare. and those that have been brought to experience the benefits of the death of Christ know and believe that his death was not of necessity ' but a free and voluntary gift. How plainly does he declare. and how expressively describe this himself: 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' (John x. 11, 18.) His sacrifice is everywhere called 'a sacrifice of himself. a voluntary gift.' 'He offered up himself.' (Heb. vii. 27~) 'By the sacrifice of himself (Heb. ix. 26;) 'Who gave himself a ransom.' (I Tim. ii. 6.) And so universally. But all these scriptures are flatly contradicted. all this cloud of testimonies is utterly nullified. if the body of Christ was 'mortal.' -

\*The True Signification of the English Adjective, -Mortal.- and the Awfully Erroneous Consequences of the Application of that Term to the Ever Immortal Body of Jesus Christ. briefly considered." By Henry Cole, London.

\*\* 1792-1834. An exceedingly popular London preacher, who adopted strange and erroneous views.

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