

Orthodoxy - Jesus, A Perfect Humanity

New City Catechism Q.23: Why must the Redeemer be truly human?

Answer: That in human nature he might on our behalf perfectly obey the whole law and suffer the punishment for human sin; and also that he might sympathize with our weaknesses.

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

- Hebrews 2:17

If you ever hope to be truly human then you must believe and hope in Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God, was and is the perfect human being. We are not and will never be on our own. But when we see him as he is, and become like him then our humanity will be perfected and glorified. That is what we hope for in a future eternal state of our humanity. But in the meantime we can trust in Jesus to justify us in our present humanity and show us mercy for all our past, present, and future sins and weaknesses.

Jesus, the true Redeemer, was made like us. He was a recognizable functioning human being. He had hair. He had skin. He had arms and legs. He had a mouth. He had emotions. He had thoughts. He acted. He wept. He ate. He served. He talked. He walked. He related to others. He rode animals. He wore clothes and shoes. But everything he was and everything he did, he did without sin. He was a sinless righteous human being.

His humanity was a substitute for the mess we have made of ours. He actively and positively supplied a righteousness in his humanity on behalf of a fallen, sinful, wicked humanity. He was the second Adam that the first Adam could not be. He was perfect as his Heavenly Father is perfect. He was made like us in every respect, but he was not like us in respect to sin. In our humanity we can only sin. In his humanity he was without sin. And yet in his perfect humanity he became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God. He suffered the punishment for the sin of our humanity. He fulfilled all righteousness according to God's pleasure, and then it was the pleasure of the Father to put him to death. He was a perfect unblemished Lamb who was slain for the sins of the people God loved from all eternity. In his humanity he lived for us, and in his humanity died for us.

In his humanity he was tempted and tested as we are but without sin. Therefore, he was raised up in his humanity and reigns as the perfect God man to sympathize with our weaknesses and help us continually by his mercy and grace. We can come to him in our wearied humanity and he will give us rest in himself. Our humanity is wearied by our own sins and the sins of others. Our humanity is wearied by our weaknesses under trials, tests, temptations, and afflictions. Our humanity is wearied by our physical and emotional limitations and afflictions. In his sympathy with our weaknesses he will give us rest. We can come to him in our limited humanity and his grace is sufficient. Our humanity is hindered by our limits of faith and gifts to live for God's glory. Our humanity is hindered by our limits of hope and strength to do good. Our humanity is hindered by our limits of love and generosity toward others. In his sympathy with our limitations he will give us his sufficient grace.

The love of God for us in our fallen, weakened, and limited humanity never fails in the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ our Lord. By faith in him we can and will again be truly human.

The Law of Undulation and the Habits of Grace

Last week, in the [daily formation devotional](#), we prayed on Monday morning the following prayer: *Pray that Christians at Christ Covenant would be formed more and more into Christ's image through the practices of devotion, worship, accountability, hospitality, and rest.* When I prayed this prayer for myself and the congregation, I considered the law of undulation. Undulation means a rising and falling of waves. Or, in its third definition according to Webster's, "a wavy appearance, or form." I do not mean I considered the congregation as

the waves on the sea shore as coming and going. And I didn't consider people with a "wavy" appearance. But what I did consider is the nature of our Christian experience. Sometimes it lapses barely noticeable like a sea at dead low tide in the heat of summer. And, sometimes the waves rise and we ride them into shore like a joyful child picked up and carried by its gentle power.

If we ignore the law of undulation in our spiritual life we're deceived. Sometimes when a person becomes a Christian through faith in Jesus Christ, they may experience the ardors of conversion. There is a joy, excitement, and a nearness. But as time passes they may settle into a dullness with a feeling of distance from God. This spiritual undulation is to be expected. We see it throughout the Scriptures.

The psalmist says things like, "Therefore, my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure." (16:9). But just a few psalms earlier he was saying, "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?" (13:1-2) David is rejoicing and weeping. He is feels secure and forgotten. The waves rise and fall in his experience of the LORD, his covenant, relational, sincere God.

This is the way we are formed in our relationship to God. We are formed by highs and lows, verdant green pastures and dry dusty deserts, lush forests with cool running streams and quiet dark woods where we can't seem to find a way out. We cannot ignore the laws of a spiritual undulation. One of these waves is not all there is. So if we've experienced one and now we're experiencing another, we cannot expect that is where we will be forever.

Sometimes we face the dangers of believing that there is only one way of our Christian life. We berate ourselves thinking we should be experiencing something we use to but now we're not. We become anxious or despair thinking we've lost something forever. Or, we may try to manufacture a feeling or experience on our own without faith. Or, we settle for a sameness or a dullness or going through the motions, believing this is all there is to be formed in us. And this settling can be dangerous because we think all is well. "After all", we think and say to ourselves, "I was probably a little restless and radical in the beginning of my Christian life anyway. I need and the world needs from me a more moderate religious experience."

Sometimes we recognize the necessary undulation in the Christian life, but we don't like it or it makes us uncomfortable in our relationship with God and others. Therefore, we may find ourselves pursuing the ideal religious experience by our own willpower and self disciplined self directed efforts. The ideal experience is imagined like our dream vacation by the sea. The sun is shining, the temperature is perfect, the sand is white, the beach is crowded only with my chair, and the water is blue and free from anything that would make me anxious and afraid. This is dangerous also. Habits form loves, but only habits formed by grace exercised through faith, form God glorifying loves. We can begin to believe that the habits we have formed and the particular religious experience we have from these disciplined habits are the ideal that we and every other Christian should experience. And the way we get that experience is the same way for every other person. We become proud religious mean people who may recognize the law of undulation, but we ignore it while speeding to our ideal, running over others and paying God off with our efforts in the process.

Being "formed more and more into Christ's image through the practices of devotion, worship, accountability, hospitality, and rest", is reliant upon grace and is not defiant to the law of undulation. Faith is born by the grace of hearing. The grace of faith is engendered by a continued habit of hearing what God reveals in devotion, worship, accountability, hospitality, and rest. But sometimes when I open God's Word for my devotional time I am hearing like a person standing all alone in the rain in a dark forest and I'm not sure of the way out or if I should look for one. And sometimes I am hearing like one together with others loved, where the rain refreshes, the darkness is as light, the forest is like a garden city, and the way in and out is clear. There are all kinds of circumstances, situations, and relationships that are affecting the undulation of our experience of the habits of devotion, worship, accountability, hospitality, and rest. But the true and living God is forming Christ in his own. He will complete what he has begun, Christ in his own the hope of glory. However, we cannot ignore or deny the law of undulation and the habits of grace he uses in the process. So, by faith in his grace, pray and devote yourselves to his Word, come to worship, get together, pray for one another, and help each other find rest in our wavy places in life.