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2 Who Is God the Son?

A Wesleyan Faith

One of the most distinctive and beautiful portraits of John Wesley that comes down to us from the past places Wesley, dressed in the attire of an Anglican priest, standing beside a cross in a market square. Small of stature, he stands tall, holding a Bible in one hand; with the other hand extended in an arc in the air, he is clearly calling on those present to heed the invitation to accept the good news of salvation. A motley crew of humanity is gathered around him: old and young, male and female, rich and poor. In some versions even the local dogs have shown up to listen. This is Wesley at full stretch, engaged in one of the central acts of Christian ministry: preaching the gospel to those who are really hearing it for perhaps the very first time in their lives. His favorite phrase for describing what he was doing was, "I offered them Christ." This was not some cheap slogan, for Wesley meant that he offered Christ in all his offices, that is, as prophet, priest, and king. As prophet, Christ taught us truly about God; as priest, he made sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; and as king, he became Lord of all who put their faith in him. The neat summary of Christian belief concerning the person and work of Christ takes us directly to a pivotal element in any serious version of Christianity. We need to explore who Christ really is.

In the last chapter we talked about God as “three-personal.” The First Person of the Trinity is God the Father, and the Second Person of the Trinity is God the Son. Christian thinkers through the centuries have written untold pages on the Son who comes forth from the Father, but the point of all of this high-flying theology is this: the Father sends the Son to save us from sin and death, so that we can live as God wants in this life, and so that we can live with God forever. The sending of the Son into the world is an act of divine love.

The people of Israel had always believed that God was at work in the world—through creation, by choosing Israel, by loving and chastening the nation, by giving the law, by the raising up of prophets, and in many, many other ways. The early Christians believed this too, though they also believed that God had acted most decisively in the life of one person: Jesus, whom they called the Messiah. The words *Messiah* and *Christ* mean the same thing. The first comes from Hebrew, the second from Greek, but both mean “anointed one.” What does anointing have to do with anything? It was a way of designating a person whom God had chosen for a special service, specifically for leadership. The first priests of Israel, Aaron and his sons, were anointed by Moses as a way of inaugurating their priesthood (Exod 28:41). When Saul became the first king of Israel, the prophet Samuel poured oil over his head, kissed him, and said, “The LORD has anointed you ruler of his people Israel” (1 Sam 10:1). Likewise, when David became king following Saul, Samuel anointed him as well, “and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward” (1 Sam 16:13). Even a Gentile, the Persian king Cyrus, is called God’s anointed (Isa 45:51) because God chose him to accomplish divine purposes.

Jesus, like these other figures, is chosen to fulfill God’s plans, but Jesus is chosen to do so not just for Israel, but also for the entire world. Jesus the Messiah is the one through whom God would bring

salvation to all people. Jesus’ work as the Messiah, however, plays out differently than that of other people specially chosen by God and anointed. Great prophets and leaders anointed Aaron and his sons, along with Saul and David. In the case of Aaron, it was Moses who anointed, and in the cases of Saul and David, it was Samuel. Jesus, however, was anointed by an unnamed woman in the house of someone named “Simon the leper” (Mark 14:3-9), and his anointing as the Messiah doubles as his anointing for burial (14:8). Jesus will save not only through his life, but also through his death on the cross. His role as the Messiah is inseparable from this salvation. While Jesus is the Messiah, then, he is a very different kind of messiah, one who is chosen to give of himself in service and humility, even to the point of his own death, so that people like us, people who have not always lived as God wished, can be restored to a proper relationship with God. (In chapter 6 we’ll talk more about how Jesus restores our relationship with God.)

Jesus is different from other leaders of Israel in another way too: Jesus is the Son of God, not figuratively, but literally. Today, in the modern city of Nazareth in Israel, sits one of the most beautiful churches in the world. It is called the Basilica of the Annunciation. Within this church is an altar upon which are inscribed the Latin words, *verbum caro hic factum est*, which mean, “Here the Word became flesh.” Whether or not this altar marks the exact spot where the event took place, the idea is clear: God became a particular person at a particular time and place. When Christians talk about the “Annunciation,” we are talking about the angel Gabriel’s words to the Virgin Mary found in Luke 1:26-38. Gabriel says to Mary that she will conceive, bear a son, and name him Jesus. He says, “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David” (1:32). Understandably, this confuses Mary. “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” she asks (1:34). Gabriel responds, “The Holy Spirit will

come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God" (1:35). In other words, God—through the Holy Spirit—will be the father of this child. Presumably, Mary could respond with fear, refusal, or simply confusion, but instead she responds, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (1:38).

With that, the greatest miracle the world has ever known took place—the Incarnation. This term, *Incarnation*, describes what happened when God became a human being. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was conceived within Mary. Jesus was, in a very real way, the Son of God. Therefore within Jesus are both humanity and divinity. In Colossians 1:15-23, we find what is probably an ancient Christian hymn (though here it is not printed in verse). Some of the ideas most crucial to our understanding of the Incarnation are expressed in this passage:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

This passage of Scripture offers us a glimpse of Christ's divine nature—that Christ existed before all of creation, that he is the very image of God, and that the fullness of God dwelled within Christ.

Christ is here called the "firstborn from the dead," meaning that Christ's resurrection is the first, but not the last, because resurrection is not just for Jesus only, but for all who follow him. Moreover, it was through Christ that all of creation came into being. If we think about this in terms of the three-personal nature of God, we could say that God the Father is the wellspring of life, but it is through God the Son that creation actually came into being. We see similar ideas in John 1:3 and Hebrews 1:2. The Father is the source, but the Son is the creator.

Humanity and divinity are both fully present in Jesus Christ. Yet humanity and divinity are hard concepts to hold together. Early in the Church's history, Christians debated with one another over such questions as, "If Jesus was divine, did he have a real human body?" "Was Jesus an angel or a spirit, rather than a human being?" and "Was Jesus more divine than human, or more human than divine, or equally human and divine?" Over time, however, the Church came to this basic consensus: Jesus was fully divine and fully human. Yes, Jesus had a flesh-and-blood body. Yes, he suffered, and he really died. And, yes, he was also fully God.

One of the oldest bits of Christian worship we have is found in Paul's Letter to the Philippians. In this letter, Paul is dealing with arguments within the church in Philippi. He tells these Christians that they should shun selfish ambition and conceit and humble themselves, even going so far as to regard other people as better than they are. He tells them that their example in this regard is Christ himself, and then he quotes from a song that these Christians sang together in worship. In Philippians 2:6-11, Paul says that Christ Jesus,

though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,

but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

This is sometimes called the *kenosis* hymn. *Kenosis* is a Greek word that means “emptying.” This is a hymn about what it means for Christ to empty himself of his power and majesty, to become a human, to humble himself to the point of death—even death on a cross. Rather than seeking to hold on to the glory, power, and honor that were rightly his, he emptied himself of these, and he gave of himself for others. That is why God the Father exalted Jesus. God raised him from the dead, and the risen Christ lives eternally with the Father.

This is the heart of the Incarnation: in Jesus Christ, God took on the life of a human being. How can this be? Didn’t Jesus pray to God? Didn’t Jesus say things about his Father in heaven? How is it that Jesus could be God if God was also in heaven, receiving Jesus’ prayers? The key to these questions is remembering that the Christian God is three-personal. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God the Son became flesh in Jesus Christ, and while God the Father and the Holy Spirit were present with the Son, it was nonetheless through the Son that God took on humanity. When Jesus prayed, he prayed to God the Father. God’s heavenly and spiritual reign continued while God the Son was made human in Jesus Christ.

The prologue to the Gospel of John (John 1:1-18) reflects yet another ancient hymn. In this hymn, Jesus is said to have come from God’s Word. For both Jews and Gentiles in the ancient world, the Greek word *logos*—which we normally translate as “word”—had a wide range of meanings. To sum them up in the context of this hymn, though, when these early Christians talked of God’s “Word,” they meant to refer to God’s will, ordering of the universe, reason, and power. It is through God’s Word that life came into being. Indeed, through God’s Word, everything came into being. Greek-speaking people in the first century would have been familiar with this notion of the “Word” as the creative agent of a divine being, the way we today are familiar with abstract concepts such as democracy, capitalism, and evolution. These concepts are just part of the sea in which we swim, as the “Word” was to ancient Greek-speaking people. For us living today, it can be hard to get our heads around the ancient concept of the Word because it is not part of our common chest of ideas. Nevertheless, it can be helpful to think of God’s Word as God’s self-expression. To put it differently, a sentence that you think in your head is different from a sentence you speak out loud. The sentence spoken out loud is like God’s Word.

John, however, makes an astounding claim, one that did not match up with commonplace thinking about the Word: “the Word became flesh and lived among us.” This was not how most ancient people thought about the Word. For these people, flesh and spirit were opposed to each other. They were like oil and water: you could put them in the same bowl, but they did not mix. The flesh was

simply a poor replication of the spirit. God's Word was Spirit, yet these early Christians said that God's Word did become flesh. The Word did not put on flesh or simply have the appearance of flesh. The Word became flesh, and when that happened, Jesus Christ came into the world. Jesus is God's self-expression in the flesh. Christ came into the world to draw us closer to God.

Jesus, being fully human, had a real body, and he really did die. Yet death was not the end for Jesus—nor is death the end for those who love and follow Jesus. Jesus was raised from the dead. We call this the "Resurrection." On the third day after Jesus died, he rose from the dead. The Bible is clear that it was not Jesus' spirit, or ghost, that rose, but his body. Luke recounts one of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, when he appeared to his disciples. He came to them and said,

"Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

As if to stress the point, Jesus asks them for something to eat. The disciples give Jesus a piece of fish, and he eats it in their presence (Luke 24:36-43). Likewise in John's Gospel, Jesus appears to his disciples and shows them the marks of the crucifixion in his hands and the mark from a Roman soldier's spear in his side (20:20). Thomas had the remarkably bad luck of being absent at this particular moment, and he told the other disciples, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe" (20:25). A week later, Thomas had this opportunity, after which he exclaimed, "My Lord

and my God!" (20:28).

So Jesus, after his resurrection, has a real body. It is, however, a different kind of body than he had prior to the resurrection. Luke tells us that Jesus said that, in the resurrection, people cannot die anymore, "because they are like angels and are children of God" (20:36). John's Gospel tells that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, but he told her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father" (20:17). John tells of Jesus appearing in a locked room (20:19). The Apostle Paul writes that after the resurrection Jesus appeared to more than five hundred people at one time (1 Cor 15:6). Paul also says, "What is sown [the mortal body] is perishable, what is raised is imperishable" (1 Cor 15:42), and he talks about the resurrected body as a "spiritual body." What happens in Jesus' resurrection, then, is not the resuscitation of a corpse, but a miracle of God whereby Christ receives a new, spiritual body, but a body nonetheless. Likewise, we who know and love Jesus will be raised up as he was, in a new, spiritual body, one that will never die.

A Lived Faith

Through Jesus Christ, God, who had all power, majesty, glory, and honor, took on human form. Christ did not come as a conquering general, a mighty ruler, or a wealthy captain of industry. Christ came as a common person. He worked with his hands. He ate common, everyday food and wore common, everyday clothes. He was not one of the power elite. Jesus says of himself in Mark 10:45, "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." Christ had more power and more claim to glory than any of us could ever imagine, and he gave all of it up for people like us. Though we call him "Lord," he came to serve. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, cast out demons, and taught about God's will for humankind. He washed the feet of his own followers (John 13:1-20).

He did not ask for money or seek fame for doing these acts of kindness. He was not doing these things for himself, but for people in need: sick people, hurting people, people who needed to hear about God's will for their lives. Most significantly of all, Jesus died on the cross. Crucifixion was often called the "slave's punishment" in Jesus' day. It was generally considered the worst way to die. It was not only a form of physical torture, but it was also a way to humiliate and make an example of a criminal, a way to deter others from engaging in the kind of behavior of which the victim of crucifixion was accused. All of this takes us back to the notion of *kenosis*, or "emptying" (discussed above). Christ did not empty himself of his divinity, but he did empty himself of all of the privilege that went along with being God.

The Incarnation says something about the way in which God believes that human beings should live. Jesus lived in a particular way that teaches us about the virtues that we, his followers, should try to embody. Of course, none of us is Jesus, and we should not ever confuse ourselves with Jesus, but we can try to embody the same kind of virtues that Jesus embodied. Jesus, first and foremost, embodies self-giving. In fact, we might say that Jesus is God's self-giving to human-kind. If God is self-giving in such a remarkable way, those who try to live as God would wish should be self-giving as well. Philippians tells us that Christ "humbled himself" in taking on human form. Therefore we who follow Christ should also try to embody the virtue of humility. Jesus' ministry was one of service to others through healing, teaching, and acts of love and kindness. Therefore we should also live lives in service to others in the ways that are available to us. Jesus welcomed people into his group who were thought to be undesirables by many in his day because they were sick, sinful, poor, or perhaps all three. We who follow Jesus, then, should welcome within our family of faith those who are outcast, hurting, desperate, and in need of grace and forgiveness.

In the light of the Incarnation, how should we relate to other people? How should we spend our money? How should we spend our time? To what extent can we describe our lives as self-giving? To what extent can we say that we embody humility? Within much of our culture, these are not the values that are held up before us. Rather, the values of personal gain, fame, wealth, advancement, and prestige are being held up before us all of the time. In a culture that is obsessed with celebrity, with reality TV, and with shows in which people routinely stab one another in the back in the hopes of winning both money and celebrity, the Incarnation challenges us at the deepest level to live in a way that is countercultural. If we view the world through the lens of the Incarnation, we will see these self-aggrandizing values for what they are: they are sinful.

A Deeper Faith

The claim that Jesus of Nazareth is fully human and fully divine is clearly a dramatic, even sensational, claim. We can all agree on its relevance, but can we really say it is true? What drove the early disciples and the early church to make such an amazing assertion?

Clearly, the first disciples were deeply puzzled by their experience of Jesus. Most if not all of them saw Jesus initially as a potential political figure who would liberate them from the hated Roman occupation and restore the fortunes of Israel as a nation. This fitted nicely with their own desires to be top dogs in the new regime they hoped Jesus would establish in Jerusalem. Over time, they came to see things differently. At one level this meant they had to reorder their own desires to align them with those of Jesus and face the suffering this would involve. However, only masochists would suffer for a cause that they found incredible. Hence at a deeper intellectual level they came around to seeing Jesus as the Savior who would liberate them not only from political oppression but also from bondage

to sin and evil. Their Jewish heritage paved the way for this radical shift of vision by making it clear that God was indeed a liberator, but the liberation cut much deeper than mere liberation from political oppression. Human nature itself needed to be set free from its hopelessly disordered state and turned the right way up. Only God could pull off this deeper operation.

The key to the change of their vision of Jesus lay in the actions they saw Jesus perform. The bottom line was that Jesus performed the acts that every informed Jew knew only God could perform. When they saw Jesus teach with searching authority; when they witnessed him heal with direct miraculous power; when they heard him forgive sins against God without hesitation; when they saw him exercise direct power over sickness, nature, and death; when they noted his amazing authority over evil and the demonic; all these gave them an acute pain in the brain. Why? It was because these were exactly the acts that identified the very God of Israel. Moreover, in his trial, Jesus openly claimed to be the Son of God (see Mark 14:61-62). When you ponder these over time, you are left with few options. You can say that Jesus was an imposter and a fraud. You can answer that he needs psychiatric attention. Or you can begin to see that Jesus is indeed something much more than a mere prophet or teacher: he really is the Son of God. Once you make this shift, other things fall into place. Why is it that he never asks forgiveness for his own sins? How is it that there is such intimacy with the God of Israel? Why and how was he so dramatically raised from the dead? Why and how does Jesus, risen from the dead, bestow on the first disciples and on us the Holy Spirit? Why does the early church begin to worship him as they worship the God of Israel? What happened is that Jesus came to be seen as the Lord, the Son of God, acting as God did to recreate and restore the world to sanity and good health.

Historians have always been baffled by Jesus. Over the last two hundred years, when many have rejected the teaching of the Church about Jesus, they have tried ever so hard to figure out an alternative. Try as they may, they cannot reach a consensus. In many cases they simply project their own vision of what they would like Jesus to be; they recreate Jesus in their own image. The early disciples did not do this. On the contrary, they were driven to abandon their image of Jesus and learn a whole new way of thinking and speaking about him. We can see this in the Gospels, most especially in the Gospel of John. The early church ran with this profound vision of Jesus as the Son of God and in time hammered out the full implications that we find written up so succinctly in the creeds. This kind of move involved an intellectual revolution in the theology of Judaism. It required intense reflection and amazing intellectual boldness. It also required a massive revolution in how they lived; and it led into blessings untold in their lives and in the church as a whole. The same holds true today. This is the faith that has sustained the saints and martyrs of history; it also sustains deep faith today, the kind of faith that can really change the world.

The Catechism

God the Son

Q. Who is God the Son?

A. The Second Person of the Trinity, through whom all creation has come into being. The Son is the only perfect image of the Father, and he shows us the nature of God.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being” (John 1:1-3).

Q. What is the nature of God revealed in Jesus?

A. God is love.¹

“God is love” (1 John 4:8).

Q. What do we mean when we say that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and became incarnate from the Virgin Mary?

A. We mean that by God’s own act, his divine Son received our human nature from the Virgin Mary, his mother.²

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel” (Isa 7:14).

“The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. . . . For nothing will be impossible with God’” (Luke 1:35, 37).

“Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,

‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

‘Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,

and they shall name him Emmanuel,’

which means, ‘God is with us.’ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus” (Matt 1:18-25).

Q. Why did he take our human nature?

A. The divine Son became human so that in him human beings might be adopted as children of God, and be made heirs of God’s kingdom.³

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children” (Gal 4:4-5).

“But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God” (John 1:12).

“He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:13-14).

"If I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15).

Q. What is the relationship between Jesus' divinity and his humanity?

A. Jesus is fully divine and fully human.

"[Christ], though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness" (Phil 2:6-7).

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15).

"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9).

Q. What is the great importance of Jesus' suffering and death?

A. By his death, Christ made perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual.⁴

"Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,

struck down by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed" (Isa 53:4-5).

"The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29).

"[He] was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25).

"God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21).

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'" (Gal 3:13).

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph 1:7).

"If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

Q. What is the great significance of Jesus' bodily resurrection?

A. In the Resurrection Jesus overcame death, and his rising presages our own.

"We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him" (Rom 6:9).

"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being" (1 Cor 15:20-21).

"And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them" (2 Cor 5:15).

Q. What does it mean to say that Jesus ascended into heaven?

A. We mean that Jesus took our human nature into heaven, where he now reigns with the Father and intercedes for us.⁵

"For / there is one God; / there is also one mediator between God and humankind, / Christ Jesus, himself human, / who gave himself a ransom for all / —this was attested at the right time" (1 Tim 2:5-6).

"[He] has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him" (1 Pet 3:22).

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

Q. How can we share in his victory over sin, suffering, and death?⁶

A. We receive our salvation by putting our whole trust in Jesus Christ for our salvation.

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'" (John 11:25-26).

"Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father'" (John 14:9).

"There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us" (2 Cor 5:19).

"So that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10-11).

"He has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death,
so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable
before him" (Col 1:22).

"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him" (Col 2:6).

In Your Own Words

1. How did you become a Christian? Who offered you Christ? How do you offer Christ to others?
2. As the Messiah, Jesus is chosen to give of himself in service and humility and, as Christians, we are called to do the same thing. Give an example of how you serve. Whose service do you admire? In what ways does your church encourage people to serve?

3. There is a lot of talk about leadership these days—in the church, in business, in the community, in the home. What are the most important qualities of a leader? Is leadership something a person is born with or something that can be learned?
4. The Church has debated about the humanity and divinity of Christ for many years. How do you understand that Jesus was both human and divine? What difference does it make to say that Jesus is God? What difference does it make that Jesus lived and dwelt among us?
5. On the cross, Jesus emptied himself of all of his privileges. What privileges were you born with? What privileges were you born without? What do privileges do for a person? What does it say to you that Jesus would suffer and die on a cross?
6. What does it mean to you that Jesus forgives, heals, guides, sustains, and reconciles? Give an example of a time when you or someone you know experienced the love of Jesus as forgiveness, healing, guidance, or reconciliation.

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fe now and forever.

Notes

Introduction

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version*.
2. "The Way to the Kingdom" in *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, eds. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 125.
3. *Roman Catechism*, Prologue, 10.

1. Who Is God the Father?

1. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, revised and amplified version (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 162.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. This statement comes from Article I of the "Articles of Religion" in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2008), ¶103. We have changed "Holy Ghost" to "Holy Spirit."
5. This Q and A is taken from the *Eastern Orthodox Catechism* (Boston: The Albanian Orthodox Church in America, 1954), 16.
6. Ibid.

2. Who Is God the Son?

1. This Q & A is taken directly from “The Catechism” in *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 849.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 850.

4. Answer adapted from Article XX of the “Articles of Religion,” in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2008).

5. Answer from the *BCP*, 850.

6. Ibid.

3. Who Is God the Holy Spirit?

1. “Come, Holy Ghost, Our Hearts Inspire,” *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 603.

2. The NIV reads, “and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” The NRSV translates this passage as “a wind from God swept over the face of the waters,” offering in footnotes alternate translations of “while the spirit of God,” or “while a mighty wind.”

3. John Wesley, preface to “Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament,” in *Wesley’s Notes on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury, 1987), 20.

4. Many in the Western church, including leading Wesleyan theologians, believe that the phrase “and the Son” should be dropped.

5. Q & A adapted from Article III of the “Confession of Faith” in *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2008), ¶103.

6. Question taken from *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 852.

7. Ibid., 853.

8. We leave Holy Spirit, and

1. See “Th
Outler and Ricl

2. Ibid., 1

3. Ibid., 1

4. John W
vol. 11, ed. Th

5. Ibid., 6

6. This Q
University Pre
about human i

7. *BCP*, 8

8. Adapt
pline of *The U*
House, 2008),

9. Adapt

10. *BCP*,

1. “Orig
and Richard F

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Augu
Press, 1991),