

1 John: Discussion Questions

Week 2: The Problem and John's Response

1. Read 1:1-4 and Jn 1:1-14. 1 Jn's prologue is thought to parallel the Gospel of Jn's. What similarities and differences do you see between the two? Below is a chart of parallels between the prologues (Brown, 179).

<u>John 1:1-18</u>		<u>1 John 1:1-4(5)</u>	
1a	In the beginning was the Word	1a	What was from the beginning
1b	The Word was in God's presence	2de	Eternal life which was in the Father's presence
4a	In him (the Word) was life	1f	The word of life
4b	This life was the light of men	5d	God is light
5ab	The light shines on in the darkness and, for the darkness did not overcome it	5e	and in Him there is no darkness at all
14a	The Word became flesh	2a	This life was revealed
14b	and made his dwelling among us	2f	and was revealed to us
14c	and we looked at his glory	1d	what we looked at
16ab	Of his fullness we have all received	3de	The communion we have is with
17a	through Jesus Christ		the Father and with His Son,
18b	God the only Son		Jesus Christ

Why do you think John begins 1 Jn this way? Why did he begin his Gospel with a prologue (and not, as we have discussed before, an infancy story)?

2. What is John's solution to the schism which is rending his church?
3. According to one commentator (*Dictionary of the Later New Testament*, IVP, 1988),

While christology was the main battleground in the community, the tangible expression of these disagreements came in the form of open conflict and hostility. *Faulty christology spilled into unethical conduct.*

Does this make sense to you? How would, say, Cerinthus' adoptionist view have led to certain views about ethics? (We will revisit this later when we think about the view of the atonement in 1 Jn.)

Now compare your answer to the saying of Gregory of Nazianzus (see below for context),¹

¹ One of the most profound statements in the history of Christianity, in my humble opinion. The context of Gregory's quote is a refutation of those who say that Christ had a human body but divine, not human, mind—the "God in a bod" theory (taken from his 4th-c. letter "To Cleodnius the Priest Against Apollinarius", found in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Vol 2, #7, p. 648, at www.ccel.org):

If anyone has put his trust in Him as a Man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation. **For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved.** If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as a whole. Let them not, then, begrudge us our complete salvation, or clothe the Saviour only

That which was not assumed is not healed; but that which is united to God is saved.

(Related is Rom 6:5-7, “If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”; also Phil 2:7+; Col 1:19-20; 1 Cor 15:35-37.)

Finally, compare this to Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s more modern and more German statement:

Only because God has become human is it possible to know and not despise real human beings.

with bones and nerves and the portraiture of humanity. For if His Manhood is without soul, even the Arians admit this, that they may attribute His Passion to the Godhead, as that which gives motion to the body is also that which suffers. But if He has a soul, and yet is without a mind, how is He man, for man is not a mindless animal? And this would necessarily involve that while His form and tabernacle was human, His soul should be that of a horse or an ox, or some other of the brute creation. This, then, would be what He saves; and I have been deceived by the Truth, and led to boast of an honour which had been bestowed upon another.

Addendum: The context of Gregory's quote is a refutation of those who say that Christ had a human body but divine, not human, mind—the “God in a bod” theory (taken from his 4th-c. letter “To Cledonius the Priest Against Apollinarius”, found in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Vol 2, #7, p. 648, at www.ccel.org):

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Also from the same letter by Gregory:

Further let us see what is their account of the assumption of Manhood, or the assumption of Flesh, as they call it. If it was in order that God, otherwise incomprehensible, might be comprehended, and might converse with men through His Flesh as through a veil, their mask and the drama which they represent is a pretty one, not to say that it was open to Him to converse with us in other ways, as of old, in the burning bush [4705] and in the appearance of a man. [4706] But if it was that He might destroy the condemnation by sanctifying like by like, then as He needed flesh for the sake of the flesh which had incurred condemnation, and soul for the sake of our soul, so, too, He needed mind for the sake of mind, which not only fell in Adam, but was the first to be affected, as the doctors say of illnesses. For that which received the command was that which failed to keep the command, and that which failed to keep it was that also which dared to transgress; and that which transgressed was that which stood most in need of salvation; and that which needed salvation was that which also He took upon Him. Therefore, Mind was taken upon Him. This has now been demonstrated, whether they like it or no, by, to use their own expression, geometrical and necessary proofs. But you are acting as if, when a man's eye had been injured and his foot had been injured in consequence, you were to attend to the foot and leave the eye uncared for; or as if, when a painter had drawn something badly, you were to alter the picture, but to pass over the artist as if he had succeeded. But if they, overwhelmed by these arguments, take refuge in the proposition that it is possible for God to save man even apart from mind, why, I suppose that it would be possible for Him to do so also apart from flesh by a mere act of will, just as He works all other things, and has wrought them without body. Take away, then, the flesh as well as the mind, that your monstrous folly may be complete.

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