

Sharp-Needham Debate

A Debate On
The Nature
of
Jesus Christ

Sharp-Needham Debate

A Debate on the
Nature of Jesus Christ

Proposition: Resolved: The Scriptures teach that the Son of God, in the days of His flesh, emptied Himself of the use of His own peculiarly divine attributes.

Keith Sharp Affirms

James P Needham Denies

(first published in **Guardian of Truth** magazine,
reprinted by permission)



FAITH and FACTS Press

P.O. Box 681275

Indianapolis, Indiana 46268

Table of Contents

First Affirmative, Keith Sharp.....	3
First Negative, James P. Needham.....	9
Second Affirmative, Keith Sharp.....	16
Second Negative, James P. Needham.....	23
Third Affirmative, Keith Sharp.....	29
Third Negative, James P. Needham.....	36

First Affirmative - Keith Sharp

(1) I appreciate Brother Mike Willis for being willing to publish this discussion and Brother James P. Needham for being willing to engage in it. I hope the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace will be the result. I am willing to extend the right hand of fellowship to those who believe that Jesus was fully God and fully man and was tempted to sin as a man. For those who believe Jesus sometimes used His own divine attributes while on earth, I think you are mistaken, but since we both agree on His deity and His humanity, our disagreement should not affect our fellowship.

(2) Proposition: Resolved: The Scriptures teach that the Son of God, in the days of His flesh, emptied Himself of the use of His own peculiarly divine attributes.

(3) Definitions: "The Son of God": Jesus Christ, the divine, incarnate Word. "in the days of His flesh": for the 33 years He lived as a man on earth. "emptied": to be defined in course of argument. "His own peculiarly divine attributes": His characteristics that set Him apart as deity. I neither affirm nor believe He emptied Himself of the possession of these attributes but that He emptied Himself of their use.

Questions for Brother Needham:

(1) Must one believe that Jesus used all His own divine attributes while on earth to be saved?

(2) Did Jesus have a human spirit?

(3) Could Jesus have sinned?

(4) If so, why didn't He? The Scriptures affirm that Jesus is God (e.g., John 1:1). While on this earth He was "God."

Sharp-Needham Debate

with us" (Matthew 14:23).

(5) God has certain characteristics which He shares with none of His creatures (Isaiah 46:9). They are peculiarly His and are the distinguishing attributes of deity, expressing His divine nature. God exists in "the form of God" (Philippians 2:5-6), He is eternal (Psalm 90:2); unchangeable (Malachi 3:6), perfectly free to do as He wills (Job 23:13); omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-12); omniscient (Psalm 147:5); omnipotent (Isaiah 40:28); infinitely holy, i.e., cannot be tempted to sin (Revelation 4:8; James 1:13); and glorious (Psalm 113:4). He is distinct from humans in that He is an invisible, immortal Spirit (Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 6:13-16; John 4:24).

(6) Because God has perfect freedom, He can limit the use of His divine attributes without ceasing to be God, deity, or divine. He no longer creates worlds (Genesis 2:1-3), but He is still the Creator (Acts 17:24). He will never again destroy the world by water (Genesis 9:8-15), but He still retains the power to destroy the world (2 Peter 3:10-12). He no longer imparts miracle working power to His people (1 Corinthians 13:8-13), but He is still all powerful (Revelation 4:8). To deny this truth is to deny one of the peculiar attributes of God, His perfect freedom to do as He wills.

(7) The Scriptures also affirm that Jesus was a man. Isaiah prophesied the Messiah would be a "Man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3). Jesus called Himself a "Man" (John 8:40) in the same conversation in which He claimed to be "I AM" (John 8:58). The apostles called Him "a Man" (e.g., Acts 2:22). The divine Word became a man by the miracle of the virgin birth (Matthew 1:18-23).

Sharp's First Affirmative

(8) For God to become man, He had to empty Himself.

The apostle Paul exhorted the Philippians to have the mind of Christ, the mind of humility. To both explain and illustrate his lesson, the inspired apostle explained how Jesus became a man.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

(9) The term "form" means "*the external appearance*" (Thayer. 418) and further "signifies the form as it is the utterance of the inner life; not 'being,' but 'mode of being,' or better, 'mode of existence'" (Trench. 262). This form is something which can be changed (cf. Mark 16:12).

(10) The phrase "made Himself of no reputation" is translated "emptied himself" in both the **American Standard** and **New American Standard** versions. The verb means "to empty" (Vine. 2:25), "to empty, make empty" (Thayer. 344; so Arndt & Gingrich. 429).

(11) The term translated by the negative conjunction "but" (verse 7) is "an adversative participle indicating a difference with or contrast to what precedes" (Arndt & Gingrich. 37). For example, in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, when Paul indicated the Corinthians had formerly been immoral, "but" were then "washed," "sanctified," and "justified," he was indicating they were no longer one (immoral) but were the other (washed, sanctified, justified). The same grammatical construction is used in the same way in the immediate context to state the point that Jesus' humility illustrates (Philippians 2:3).

Sharp-Needham Debate

(12) So the apostle Paul teaches that Christ emptied Himself of the two things in the clause before the conjunction "but" (the form of God and equality with God) and, in contrast "took the form of a servant," and being in that form He did something, "He humbled Himself," and that humility extended to the point that He was obedient, obedient to the point of death, "even the death of the cross," that is, the most shameful death of all (cf. Galatians 3:13).

(13) This does not mean that Jesus "in the days of His flesh" ceased being deity. But He did empty Himself of the form of God and that which went with it, equality with God. (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:9).

(14) The longest passage in the Bible on the nature of Christ is Hebrews chapters one and two. Immediately after he had affirmed the deity of Jesus (Hebrews chapter one), the inspired writer affirmed He became a "man ... the son of man" (Hebrews 2:6,9). He who was "so much better than the angels" (Hebrews 1:4) "was made a little lower than the angels" (Hebrews 2:9). He became one with us, becoming our brother (Hebrews 2:11). As our brother, He worshipped and trusted God (Hebrews 2:12-13). "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren" (Hebrews 2:17).

(15) Jesus did not just enter a fleshly body; He "became flesh" (John 1:14). "Flesh and blood" (Hebrews 2:14) is a figurative expression for man with his human nature (Matthew 16:17; Galatians 1:16). Jesus fully shared our human nature (Hebrews 2:14). To deny that Jesus became truly and fully human and was tempted to sin in the same ways we are is to deny Him as Savior and High Priest (Hebrews 2:10-11,17-18). It is to be antichrist (1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 7).

Sharp's First Affirmative

(16) Just as God has peculiar divine attributes, humans have characteristics that are in contrast with the divine attributes. It is a logical contradiction for both sets of attributes to be in us simultaneously. Just as it is a denial of the deity of Christ to deny He possesses the divine attributes, it is a denial of His humanity to deny He possessed human attributes.

(17) Which characteristics did Jesus use in the days of His flesh, human or divine? He who existed "in the form of God" took "the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7). He Who is "from everlasting to everlasting" was "born of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). The unchangeable God became subject to change in both body and spirit (Luke 2:52). The perfectly free Word became the servant of God and men (Philippians 2:5-8). The one Who is present everywhere was limited to a local presence (John 10:40; 11:1,7,17-21). The Being whose "understanding is infinite" "increased in wisdom" (Luke 2:52). The One who "Neither faints nor is weary" was "wearied" (John 4:6). He who "cannot be tempted by evil" "was in all points tempted as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). He emptied Himself of the divine glory (John 17:5). The invisible God was seen of men (1 John 1:1-3). The immortal God died (Hebrews 2:14-15). He Who was Spirit took on a fleshly existence (Luke 24:39). The attributes Jesus used while in the flesh were all human characteristics, not divine. They included attributes of the spirit as well as of the fleshly body. He did not cease to possess the divine attributes, but the attributes He used were human.

(18) This formulated argument will demonstrate the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. (1) It was the will of God that the Son of God, in the days of His flesh, act in the role of a servant (Isaiah 52:13). (2) The Son of God, in His role as a servant, was a man (Isaiah 53:3). (3) The Son of God, in the days of His flesh, always did His Father's will (John 8:29). (4) Therefore, the Son of God, in the days of His flesh, acted in the capacity of a man (cf. Philippians 2:5-8).

(19) This is not a denial of the deity of Christ; it is an affirmation of His humanity. Though we may never fully comprehend how Jesus could

Sharp-Needham Debate

both be fully human and fully divine, we must not deny either.

(20) Jesus Christ, in the days of His flesh, was God as He is and man as he ought to be. The Scriptures teach that to attain this dual nature He emptied Himself of the use of His own peculiarly divine attributes to employ human attributes. Therefore, the Scriptures teach that the Son of God, in the days of His flesh, emptied Himself of the use of His own peculiarly divine attributes.

List of Works Cited

Arndt, W.F. and F.W. Gingrich, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.**

Trench, Richard C., **Synonyms of the New Testament.**

Vine, W.E., **Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.**

Thayer, J.H., **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.**

First Negative - James P Needham

1. Introduction: This discussion came about as the result of the editor's inviting me to submit some material on what is popularly known as "the Welch heresy," namely, that Jesus in the flesh was just an ordinary man, dispossessed of His Deity. Keith sent me his booklet on "The Son," published by the Welch organization, which caused me to wonder why he wanted to defend Welch, since he does not agree with what Welch has been advocating. In fact he says he would have disassociated himself from Welch long ago had he not apologized for saying that Jesus gave up His deity. Keith's defense of Welch, then, is based upon that apology, which implies that he and Welch now agree which, really, is not the case. Keith, feeling that my articles would misrepresent what he thinks Welch believes, asked for equal space to reply or for a written debate. Mike and I agreed to a written discussion. In a letter dated to me March 10, 1997, Keith said, "*John Welch has been apologizing for seven years for saying Jesus gave up His deity.*" Welch needs to do more than apologize, he needs to repent and bring forth its fruits. If Welch's apology 7 years ago for his unfortunate statement equals repentance for his false doctrine, why has he engaged in 4 or 5 debates in which he has defended his original idea?--not his original wording. There is a difference between apologizing for an unfortunate or poorly worded statement and repenting of a false doctrine. Keith says he is determined to put this issue behind us. Wonderful! But we can do that scripturally only by agreeing with what the Bible teaches on the subject. Sweeping it under the rug, won't put it behind us.

2. Keith states that "*any denial of the deity of Christ is "heresy," antichrist" (Par. 15), and "blatant infidelity" (Letter March 10, 1997).* He says, "*I have never said, either in print or orally, that Jesus emptied Himself of the possession of His divine attributes, or that He ever ceased being fully divine. Nor have I ever believed such" (Letter March 10, 1997).* I can appreciate this, but I believe Keith is still in error.

Sharp-Needham Debate

3. Ambiguous language in his proposition. Keith's proposition affirms that Christ "emptied Himself of the use of all His own peculiarly divine attributes" (par. 2). This is ambiguous, and at best anguished English. "Use" is a verb indicating action. One can restrain himself from an action, but it is awkward to say that one can empty himself of the use of an action. In my judgment, Keith is here making provision for his use (misuse) of the word "empty" in Phil. 2:5-8. While his misuse of it differs from those who have denied Christ's Deity in the flesh, I believe he is, nevertheless, in error. To show his misuse of this passage is to destroy both the Welch position and Keith's. Keith occupies a middle of the road position between that of Welch and others and the truth. While Welch has affirmed that Christ emptied Himself of all His divine attributes, Keith says he didn't empty Himself of these attributes, but of the use of them. More on this later.

4. Keith's questions: "(1) *Must one believe that Jesus used all His own divine attributes while on earth to be saved?*" No. Keith wanted me to affirm this, but I refused. He said this has been affirmed by Connie Adams (letter March 10, 1997). Connie can deal with that, but as for me, since I don't know all of Christ's "peculiarly divine attributes," I don't know if He used all of them or not. All I have to do to defeat Keith's proposition is prove that our Lord used just one such attribute because he affirms that He "emptied Himself of the use of ALL of His own peculiarly divine attributes." (Emphasis mine, jpn).

5. "(2) *Did Jesus have a human spirit?*" No. In Keith's book, "The Son," he says Christ had but one Spirit (p.40). But since Keith believes Christ never divested Himself of any of "His own peculiarly divine attributes," and since the possession of the Divine Spirit is one of "His peculiarly divine attributes," then Jesus retained His Divine Spirit while in the flesh, but He didn't use it. But if He didn't use His Divine Spirit, He had to have a human spirit to animate His body, therefore Keith is forced to believe that Jesus had two spirits, but used only one!

Needham's First Negative

His divine Spirit lay dormant in His body for 33 years! If that is correct, why did Jesus say on the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," not spirit[S]? (Lk. 23:46). Which spirit did He give up on the cross, Keith? And tell us where was the other Spirit during His three days and nights in the tomb? Furthermore, since Keith's position forces him to the conclusion that Jesus had two spirits, and since Christ was "made in all points like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17), then all men must have two spirits. I hope he will tell us about this. If Jesus had two spirits in the flesh and man has only one, then Christ was not made "in all point like His brethren" (Heb. 2:17). Things that differ are not alike. Be sure to clarify this for us, Keith.

6. "(3) *Could Jesus have sinned?*" No. If Jesus could have sinned He would have made the Father a liar, because He sent Him to earth as a perfect sacrifice for man's sins, and Jesus could not have sinned and remained a perfect sacrifice. If He could have sinned He could have nullified God's "eternal purpose," His "determinate counsel," and His foreknowledge and thus made Him a liar. Jesus was "a lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), "without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19). This was foreordained. He was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). This has reference to His sacrifice for sin. This sacrifice could be effective only if it was "without blemish and without spot." Since the sacrifice was by the "foreknowledge of God," "from the foundation of the world" and since it had to be "without blemish and without spot," then God foreknew that Christ would not sin, therefore He could not have sinned without making the Father a liar.

7. "(4) *If so, why didn't He?*" Two reasons: (1) Because the Father foreknew that He would not, and (2) Because He always did His Father's will (John 8:29; 6:38).

8. Phil. 2:5-8: In his par. 8, Keith finally gets around to the one passage which he must appropriate (or misappropriate) to his position for it to survive. In par. 10, Keith finds his favorite word "empty." These beautiful verses tell us that Christ existed in the "form" of God, which

Sharp-Needham Debate

Keith correctly says is "the external appearance" and a "mode of being" and "existence" that "can be changed." Even his quoted definitions defeat his misuse of this passage as we shall see.

9. In par. 11, he says, "*but*" (v. 7) is "*an adversative participle indicating a difference with or contrast to what precedes*" and cites Arndt and Gingrich, p. 37. With this I find no problem, but what is contrasted is the question? Keith thinks it is Christ's pre-flesh possession and "use of all His own peculiarly divine attributes" and His possession and non use of them in the flesh. There is no way to correctly get this from this passage. This is Keith's assumption and his departure from the context of the passage and his own quoted definition of "form." If it is a "mode of being" and "existence" that "can be changed," then it has no reference to all of Christ's "peculiarly divine attributes," but to only one, the mode of His pre-flesh existence, a form that was changed. What is contrasted is what was the subject under consideration in this passage, namely, the "form of God," the "mode of existence" and not "all of His own peculiarly divine attributes," but to only one, the mode of His pre-flesh existence, a form that was changed. What is contrasted is what was the subject under consideration in the passage, namely, the "form of God," the "mode of existence" and not "all of His own peculiarly divine attributes." Jesus emptied Himself of that "form" which was "equal with God" in form, that is Spirit, and that is contrasted with the "form" He took on as a man, a flesh, blood, and bones body.

10. The obvious subject of this passage is "form." The words "form," "likeness," and "fashion" that run through the whole passage all indicate that the subject is the "FORM" that Jesus had before He came in the flesh; He was equal with the Father in "FORM," contrasted with what He was "made" when He came in the flesh. Then we are told He "emptied Himself." Of what? Of that which is the subject of the passage, "THE

Needham's First Negative

FORM OF GOD." He changed His form, as Keith's quoted definition of the word indicates, not "His own "peculiarly divine attributes," but the "form" in which He previously existed. We are then told what that changed form was, it was "the form of a servant," it was "in the likeness of men," it was "in fashion as a man," all having to do with what appears to the eye in harmony with Keith's quoted definition. It was a flesh and blood body like ours. When we keep the passage in context rather than misappropriating it to some preconceived idea, there is no problem with it. The only "peculiarly divine attribute" of which Jesus emptied Himself was the "form" in which He existed before taking on the "form" of the "likeness of men."

11. Changing the form of something does not change or divest it of its inherent attributes. I have in my garage some plastic, leather, steel, and rubber which exist in the form of an automobile. These elements once existed in another form, but the manufacturer changed their form into an automobile, but the plastic is still plastic, leather is still leather, steel is still steel, and rubber is still rubber. They all maintain their essential attributes and continue to function in accordance with their inherent nature. All that has changed is their form. So it is with Christ. All that changed was His pre-flesh "form," not the "use of all His own peculiarly divine attributes." The only divine attribute Jesus lost in the incarnation was the "form" in which he had existed. The only thing he gained in the flesh was a body like ours.

12. What proof does Keith offer that Christ "*emptied Himself of the use of all His own peculiarly divine attributes*"? He cites passages that prove that Jesus bore the characteristics of a man which I don't deny. I'll accept anything the Bible says about Christ's Godhood or His manhood, but passages that prove that He was a man don't prove that He did not use some of His "own peculiarly divine attributes" any more than proving that He used some of His Divine attributes proves that He didn't use some of His human attributes. In Par. 16, Keith says, "*It is a logical contradiction for both sets of attributes to be in use simultaneously.*" What is the proof for this assertion? Keith gave none. This is his opinion, and it does not comport with the truth.

Sharp-Needham Debate

13. In Par. 14, Keith says *"To deny that Jesus became truly and fully human and was tempted to sin in the same ways we are is to deny Him as Savior and High Priest (Heb. 2:10-11,17-18). It is to be antichrist (1 John 4:2,3; 2 Jn. 7)."* I do not deny that Jesus was in His flesh fully human, but I do deny that He was "tempted in the same ways we are" if by that Keith means that Jesus had illicit desires or thoughts, or that He found sin appealing. I cannot accept this because of its consequences to the truth and the purity of our Saviour. If Jesus was tempted in the exact same ways that all men are, then He must have looked upon a woman to lust after her, as some men do, and therefore committed adultery in His heart (Mt. 5:28). If He had a foolish thought as all men do sometime in their life, He sinned (Prov. 24:9). Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are in the sense that Satan tried or tested Him in all areas of temptations that all men endure, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:15,16), but without sin (Heb. 4:15). To be without sin He had to be free of evil thoughts. There is no indication whatsoever that either of these areas of trial appealed to our Lord. I can't imagine such a thing, and it denigrates our Saviour to think otherwise. Satan tried our Lord, but nothing he offered appealed to Him in any of the same areas that he tries all men (Mt. 4:1-11).

14. Proof that Jesus used a divine attribute: (1) To accept worship is an attribute neither of men (Acts 10:25,26) nor of angels (Rev. 19:10) but is an EXCLUSIVE attribute of deity (Mt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10). Jesus accepted worship on many occasions, in fact, He never refused it (Matthew 2:2; 15:9; 2:11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:2; 28:9; 28:17; Mark 5:6; Luke 24:52). Therefore Jesus used a "peculiarly divine attribute." Keith agrees that Jesus used human attributes. In Par. 17. Keith, was Jesus' acceptance of worship a human or a "peculiarly divine attribute"? Keith says the divine attributes Jesus evinced were given Him by the Holy Spirit like the apostles. Did He also borrow this attribute of accepting worship from the Holy

Needham's First Negative

Spirit? The Holy Spirit is subordinate to Jesus (Jn. 16:13,14; 1 Cor. 15:24-28), yet He "emptied Himself of His own peculiarly divine attributes," and borrowed some from His subordinate. I agree that He used human attributes, and I have proven that He used a divine one. So, Keith's assumption is without proof, and contradictory to the truth, therefore, his proposition is defeated. Certainly, Jesus used no "peculiarly divine attribute" in any way that would interfere with His earthly mission as servant and Saviour. But that's a far cry from saying He used no "peculiarly divine attribute."

15. I will introduce further evidence that Jesus used "His own peculiarly divine attributes" later, but one is all that is needed to defeat Keith's proposition. Rather than introduce more at this point, I will first let Keith deal with this one. Tell us, Keith, please, was Jesus' acceptance of worship a human attribute?

16. Keith coins the catchy phrase that, "*Jesus Christ, in the days of His flesh, was God as He is and man as he ought to be*" (Par. 20), this sounds good but it's not true if Keith is talking about God the Father. In the days of Jesus' flesh He was not as God the Father is. God the Father is and always has been Spirit (Jn. 4:24). That's the "form" of which Jesus emptied Himself when He came in the flesh. How could Jesus in the flesh be as God the Father is, when God is Spirit and Jesus was flesh? Furthermore, in the flesh Jesus was not "as man ought to be" unless Keith is willing to stick with his two-spirits-in-Jesus belief and admit that man ought to have two spirits. If Jesus in the flesh had two spirits and was "as man ought to be," then man ought to have two spirits.

17. So Keith has failed to prove his proposition and I have proven it to be unscriptural.

Second Affirmative - Keith Sharp

Proposition: Resolved: The Scriptures teach that the Son of God, in the days of His flesh, emptied Himself of the use of His own peculiarly divine attributes.

(A1) I am encouraged by several points of agreement. We concur that to affirm Jesus gave up the use of peculiarly divine attributes is not to deny His deity, that to affirm He didn't use His divine attributes isn't to deny He possessed them and that Jesus emptied Himself of the use of the divine form. We agree on the grammatical construction of Philippians 2:5-8. We agree that the phrase "made Himself of no reputation" means He emptied Himself. We concur that R.C. Trench correctly defines the word "form." We agree that "Jesus bore the characteristics of a man." What difference does it make whether Jesus gave up the use of some or all of His divine attributes, as long as He was fully God and fully man? What difference does it make whether he sometimes used them or never used them? Which attributes did Jesus have to use to be deity? Will Brother Needham debate those who deny Jesus gave up the use of anything? Will they claim Brother Needham doesn't believe in Jesus' deity? Why am I branded as a false teacher?

(N1) I will not be turned aside from affirmation of the proposition to name calling and personalities. This leads to bitterness and confusion. Brother Needham and I are "popularly known" as "Antis." My motive in this debate is to defend what I believe to be divine truth. Please produce the quote in which John Welch denies the deity of Christ. Please read his statement in Faith & Facts (Jan., 1997, pp. 49-50; For a free copy of this statement, write or call F&F, PO Box 681275, Indianapolis, IN

Sharp's Second Affirmative

46268-7275; 1-800-42FAITH.). The Negative acknowledges I have never denied the deity of Jesus nor the fact He possessed all the peculiarly divine attributes. We don't have to agree on every abstruse detail of the nature of Jesus. We must agree He was fully divine and fully human (Hebrews chapters 1-2).

(N4; question 1) Thus, to preach we must believe Jesus used all His divine attributes while on earth to be saved is to preach opinion and make it equal to divine truth and a condition of salvation. Is it acceptable to make opinion a condition of salvation? (Galatians 2:3-5) When will Brother Needham debate Brother Adams? Why does he overlook his difference with Brother Adams and misrepresent Brother Welch?

(N5; question 2) I sent Brother Needham a free copy of my book **The Son** (available from F&F. \$2.95 plus shipping) so he would understand my position. The book teaches, "Jesus had one spirit, not two (Lk. 23:46), and that spirit was subject to all the limitations of His fleshly existence" (p. 40). It further states:

Was the spirit of Jesus human or divine? That depends on the perspective of the question. He was indeed "Immanuel", which is translated, 'God with us'" (Matt. 1:23). He was "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:28) But

Inasmuch as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same... (Heb. 2:14).

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren... (Heb. 2:17).

The spirit within never ceased being fully divine, but in a free act of divine self-limitation He voluntarily accepted all the limitations of human nature in body, soul, and spirit. The spirit of Jesus was both divine and human, even as Jesus Himself was both divine and human. If we by faith can accept that "the Word became flesh,@ we

Sharp-Needham Debate

should by faith accept that the spirit of Christ was both human and divine (pp. 44-45).

Why did Brother Needham ignore my explanation of the nature of Jesus' spirit and charge me with a position he knows I do not believe?

(A2) The words "divine" and "human" describe the natures of beings. Jesus' divine nature is expressed by peculiarly divine attributes; His human nature is expressed by peculiarly human attributes. To deny He possessed the divine attributes is to deny His deity; to deny He possessed the human attributes is to deny His humanity. God is a divine spirit with divine qualities. A human has a human spirit with human qualities. For example, a human spirit is limited in wisdom (Psalm 139:6), subject to temptation to sin (Ephesians 2:3), and dependent on God at the moment of death (Luke 16:22). Jesus was limited in wisdom (Luke 2:52), was tempted in spirit to sin (Matthew 4:8-9), and depended on God at the moment of death (Luke 23:46). Jesus had a human spirit.

(A3) In "all things He had to be made like [His] brethren" (Hebrews 2:17). This included spiritual attributes. For example, He worshipped (Hebrews 2:12; cf. Matthew 26:30) and trusted God (Hebrews 2:13). Jesus had a human spirit. To deny Jesus had a human spirit is to implicitly deny His humanity.

(N6; question 3). Brother Needham inadvertently teaches Calvinistic predestination. Calvinists affirm:
The Scriptures not only teach that God predestined certain individuals unto eternal life, but that all events, both small and great, come about as the result of God's eternal decree (Five Points, 37).

God's foreknowledge does not eliminate one's freedom to

Sharp's Second Affirmative

choose his own course (Joshua 24:15). God foreknew and foretold that Judas would betray Christ (Acts 1:16-20). Did Judas have to betray Christ? Could Judas have been faithful? Is God responsible for Judas' betrayal? When I watch a movie the second time, I know how it will end, but my foreknowledge doesn't make the movie end that way. God has already seen the movie.

(A4) Brother Needham's answer denies Jesus' human free will and eliminates Him as our example. When we are tempted to sin, we can succumb and sin. If He could not sin, how is He our example? (1 Peter 2:21-22)

(A5) The argument on foreknowledge is the same argument brethren with whom Brother Needham associates use to contend that we have to sin. These same brethren teach that we can be forgiven of sins of ignorance without turning from them. This is the root of the controversy over the nature of Christ. Brethren misunderstand the nature of man, and this leads them to deny the nature of Christ and to minimize sin.

(N7; question 4) He confuses "would not" with "could not." Because Jesus refused to sin in His 33 year life doesn't mean He couldn't have sinned. In my 32 years of marriage, I have refused to commit adultery. Could I have committed adultery?

(N8-9) I used several passages to show that Jesus gave up the use of His divine attributes (John 1:14; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:4-18). Trench gives a double meaning to "form": both "the external appearance" and a "mode of being" and "existence." These are not equivalents. The fuller quote of Trench explains that the word "signifies the form as it is the utterance of the inner life" (261). This contrasts with "appearance," (v. 8), which means "his whole outward presentation" (262). When the Son of God became flesh, He entered a new "mode of being" and "existence," a new "inner life."

Sharp-Needham Debate

(N10) If all Jesus did when He became flesh was to exchange the appearance of God for a human body, then He was not truly and fully man. If He retained the full use of all the other peculiar divine attributes, He could not have grown in wisdom, been a Servant, been limited to a local presence, become wearied, or been tempted to sin. The Negative argumentation denies the humanity of the Lord. Jesus did not just enter a fleshly body; He "became flesh" (John 1:14). "Flesh and blood" (Hebrews 2:14) is a figurative expression for man with his human nature (Matthew 16:17; Galatians 1:16). Jesus fully shared our human nature (Hebrews 2:14). To deny that Jesus became truly and fully human and was tempted to sin in the same ways we are is to deny Him as Savior and High Priest (Hebrews 2:10-11, 17-18). It is to be antichrist (1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 7).

(N11) Form follows function. You can't use a rubber ball for a car tire nor a crowbar for an engine. And the "form of a Servant" is possessed by one who serves, i.e., a human (Isaiah 52:13 - 53:13; Philippians 2:5-8).

(N12) How could an all wise being grow in wisdom? How could one who cannot be tempted to sin be "in all points tempted as we are"? Think! Two mutually exclusive sets of attributes (one divine, one human) cannot function simultaneously.

(N13) Who ever taught "that Jesus had illicit desires or thoughts, or that He found sin appealing"? This is a straw man. Illicit desires and thoughts are sin *per se* (Matthew 5:28). Either Jesus had all the inherent, normal, universal human desires, or He was not fully human. Men are tempted to sin in three ways (1 John 2:15-17), and Jesus was tempted to sin in these three

Sharp's Second Affirmative

ways (Matthew 4:1-11). For temptation to sin to take place, there must be desire from within and enticement from without (James 1:14). Even blessed people are thus tempted (James 1:12). The one so tempted is neither sinful nor evil unless he succumbs to temptation and sins (James 1:14). The devil tempted Jesus to sin (Matthew 4:1-11). Jesus was hungry, i.e., He had innocent desire that could be prostituted to unlawful fulfillment (verse 2). The devil enticed Him to turn stones to bread, which He could have done (verse 3). He overcame the temptation by appealing to the Word of God, not inward divine power (verse 4). He is thus both our example of how to avoid sin and the case in point to demonstrate we do not have to sin (Romans 8:3). Does Brother Needham believe, as some affirm, that Jesus was only tempted as God? Is Hebrews 4:15 in his Bible?

(N14) Satan accepts worship (Matthew 4:8-9). Herod accepted worship (Acts 12:20-23). God alone has the right to demand worship (Matthew 4:10), and Jesus in the days of His flesh never demanded that anyone worship Him. He could not have refused worship voluntarily given Him without denying Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). The Holy Spirit is subordinate to Jesus in this age. In the days of His flesh, Jesus was led by the Spirit (Matthew 4:1).

(N16) I learned that "Jesus Christ, in the days of His flesh, was God as He is and man as he ought to be" from Brother Elmer Moore. It means Jesus had the same essential nature as God, the same essential nature as man, and achieved man's highest spiritual potential. It is the uninspired equivalent of the inspired truth "Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

(A6) The Negative equates the divine Spirit of Jesus with His form as God. But He agrees He emptied Himself of this form. Thus, by the Negative argument, He had no divine spirit. But he also denies Jesus had a human spirit. What kind of spirit did He have? Or was He a body with no spirit? Was He a walking dead man?

Sharp-Needham Debate

(A7) If the Negative argument on Jesus not being a Spirit as God is means anything, it means Brother Needham does not believe Jesus was divine. He emptied Himself of the use of the attribute, not its possession.

Questions for Brother Needham:

(1) Does man have to sin?

(2) May a sincere Christian be forgiven of a sin of ignorance without coming to a knowledge of that sin and repenting of it?

(3) Must one believe that Jesus used some of his own divine attributes while on earth to be saved?

(4) Did Jesus perform miracles by His own divine power or by the Holy Spirit?

(5) Does Jesus' testimony to His own identity prove He used one of His own divine attributes?

(6) Did Jesus forgive sins by His own divine authority or by authority derived from the Father?

(A8) The Negative misunderstands both the nature of man and the nature of Jesus. To attempt to blunt the force of the Affirmative, he has implicitly denied both the humanity and deity of the Lord. I believe in both His deity and His humanity.

Works Cited

New American Standard Bible.

Steele, David N. and Curtis C. Thomas. **The Five Points of Calvinism.**

Trench, R.C. **Synonyms of the New Testament.**

Vine, W.E. **An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.**

Second Negative - James P. Needham

(1) Keith wonders if I will debate Connie Adams who disagrees with me on this matter. He accuses me of "*overlooking...differences with Connie.*" How could I overlook something I didn't know existed? I will discuss any Bible subject with anyone under honorable conditions. I might learn something!

(2) He charges me with misrepresenting John Welch. One can't represent John without misrepresenting him, or misrepresent him without representing him! He has been and continues to be all over the landscape on this issue. Even his latest apology is highly suspect. See article by Gene Frost in Gospel Truths, June 1997, p 15-17.

(3) THE SPIRIT OF JESUS: Keith seeks to escape his dilemma concerning the Spirit of Jesus by saying the Spirit of Jesus was both human and divine, though he produced no proof. It's just his opinion and he doesn't believe in preaching opinions! He uses HEB. 2:17 which says, "*Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto [his] brethren...*" But he doesn't really believe his use of this verse, for it would mean that every MAN must have a spirit that is "both human and divine" exactly like he says Jesus has with the divine part being dormant and the human part active. Even though Welch's sometimes-position that Jesus abandoned, gave up, divested Himself of all His divine powers and prerogatives is wrong, it is more consistent with his scheme than Keith's is with his. John has ridiculed the idea that Jesus was "*half man, partially man.*" Welch has said that "Jesus didn't give up His divinity for 33 years, He gave it up for all time...for *all time.*" So John and Keith are (or were) at odds at this point, I think! It depends upon which day and which apology John is using or repudiating at the moment!

Sharp-Needham Debate

(4) I did not intend to charge Keith with something he doesn't believe concerning the Spirit of Jesus. I used his own logic to show that the consequence of his position necessitates Jesus' having two spirits. He denies the two-spirits-in-Jesus position, but the consequences of his logic puts him there; remember I said the consequence of his logic, not his position. There is a difference. Keith says Jesus in the flesh retained all his "peculiarly divine attributes," He just didn't use them. (I pointed out that even this is not true because Jesus gave up, emptied Himself, of the "form of God," a "peculiarly divine attribute," when He came in the flesh Phil. 2:5-8). But Keith believes Jesus retained His Divine Spirit, and he says Jesus had a human spirit (A2). Well, if He retained His Divine Spirit (though inactive), and yet had a human spirit, that makes two. Now to try to escape this dilemma Keith says Jesus had one Spirit, part human and part divine, which he didn't bother to prove, and which Welch has ridiculed. Keith, is the one Spirit of Jesus half human and half divine? Or did he have two whole spirits--Tell us and prove it by God's word. If it has two halves, and the Divine was inactive, then Jesus' fleshly body had only a half Spirit! Now, was He made "in all points like as we are," meaning that we are just like Him, having a half spirit?

(5) Keith and others have made a lot of the fact that Jesus grew in wisdom. The Divine Spirit can do whatever He chooses to do? God can choose to know a thing or not to know it. He tested Abraham by commanding him to offer Isaac to see if he feared God. When he raised the knife to take Isaac's life, God stopped him and said, "*NOW I know that thou fearest God*" (Genesis 22:12). Did God not have the power to know this before putting Abraham through such agony? Surely! But did He have the power to choose NOT to know it until Abraham was tested? Did God grow in knowledge? If God could grow in knowledge Jesus could grow in wisdom. But the Divine Spirit in Jesus never sullied His Divine mission. It acted as a human spirit when that was appropriate. Will anyone deny that it had

Needham's Second Negative

the power thus to do?

(6) Calvinism: Keith accuses me of Calvinism because I said Jesus could not have sinned because God foreknew that man would sin and predestinated the death of the "Lamb without spot" as its remedy before the foundation of the world (Acts 2:23; Rev. 13:8; 1 Pet. 1:19). God can read history before it happens, and since He foresaw and foreknew that Jesus use His free will to choose not sin, it was impossible for Him to sin without making God a liar. If God has the ability to read history before it happens, then it happens according to how He reads it. It has nothing to do with impinging free will. God foreknew Jesus would use His free will to choose not to sin. If He had sinned, then God would have misread the pre-history, therefore would be unreliable. That would be like denying prophecy as do the Premillennialists. I do not confuse "would not" and "could not" as Keith charges. Prejudicially miscalling this Calvinism doesn't answer it. Keith doesn't believe in name calling! That's why he called me a Calvinist and an "antichrist"! Keith seems not to know what Calvinism is! If this is Calvinism, then the Bible teaches Calvinism!!!

(7) KEITH'S QUESTIONS: I find questions from the affirmative to the negative inappropriate since it is the affirmative's position that is on trial. Such questions can deprive the negative of the time or space needed to examine the arguments of the affirmative. I will, nevertheless, accommodate him with a brief answer without quoting his questions: (1) no, (2) I don't know, that's God's business. I plead God's law and leave the rest to Him, (3) Like Jesus, I'll answer this one with a question, Keith, does one have to believe that Jesus in the flesh used NONE of His Divine attributes to be saved? (4) By the Holy Spirit (MAT. 12:28; ACTS 10:38). (5) No. (6) Jesus did everything by authority given Him by the Father (John 5:30).

(8) Keith says the brethren with whom I associate believe that "we can be forgiven of sins of ignorance without turning from them" and that these same brethren "use to contend that man has to sin.@ He's building a straw man. I don't know of a single brother with whom I "associate" that believes this, so if Keith knows this, he knows more about my associates

Sharp-Needham Debate

(whoever they are) than I do! False accusations deserve an apology.

(9) Keith says I have *"implicitly denied both the humanity and deity of the Lord."* Poor me! If he hadn't told you, you wouldn't know it!

Keith asks, *"Who ever taught 'that Jesus had illicit desires or thoughts, or that He found sin appealing'? This is a straw man. Illicit desires or thoughts are sin per se."* Then in the same paragraph he says, *"for temptation to sin to take place, there must be desire from within and enticement from without."* So, since Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, then He had *"desire from within and enticement from without."* So, Keith, did Jesus have *"desire from within and enticement from without"*? Did Jesus desire to worship the devil, leap from the pinnacle of the temple, and turn stones to bread? If not, then, according to Keith, He was not tempted!

(10) In my first negative I advanced a negative argument that Jesus' acceptance of worship was a divine attribute, therefore He used a "peculiarly divine attribute." Keith's reply is that both Satan and Herod accepted worship, so this doesn't prove that Jesus used a "peculiarly divine attribute." Now here are the logical consequences of Keith's argument: (1) Herod and Satan accepted worship. (2) Jesus accepted worship, (3) Therefore, worshipping Jesus was parallel to worshipping Satan and Herod. For shame! Keith failed to tell us where God ever commanded angels to worship Herod and Satan, or the apostles as He did in the case of Christ (Heb. 1:6) I can show where the Apostles and angels prohibited it in their case (Acts 10:26; 14; Rev. 19:10; 22:9). Does this mean that since Satan and Herod didn't prohibit it, it was acceptable?

(11) NEGATIVE ARGUMENT # 2: *In the days of His flesh, Jesus claimed the power to lay down His own life and to take it up again (John 10:17,18).* If that is not a "peculiarly

Needham's Second Negative

divine attribute," let Keith tell us what it is. If Jesus was just like the Apostles, let him show us where they had this power.

NEGATIVE ARGUMENT #3: *Jesus had power on earth to forgive sins.* Keith explains this in his book, *The Son*, he says, "... *This is not to say Jesus remitted sins in the same way His apostles did (John 20:21-23), for they only wielded this authority through preaching the gospel (e.g., Acts 2:37-38), whereas Christ actually spoke pardon to the sinner (Matt. 9:2; Mk. 2:5; Lk. 5:20). The Master did not deny the Jews' assertion that thus forgiving sins was a prerogative that belonged to God alone (Matt. 9:8; Mk. 2:6-11; Lk. 5:20-24). Howbeit, the multitudes deduced from this that 'God...has given such power to men' (Matt. 9:8), and the Lord did not correct this conclusion either. Rather, He confirmed that He forgave sins by authority delegated to Him by the Father when He taught that the power He exercised to impart eternal life, i.e., forgive sins (Rom. 6:23), was given to him by His father (Jn. 5:24-26). Thus Jesus did not employ His own intrinsic power to forgive sin, but rather delegated authority.*" (*The Son*, p. 41). Keith's admission that Jesus' forgiving sins was different from the Apostles' is fatal to his proposition. He says Jesus did His works by the power of the Holy Spirit like the Apostles, but His forgiving sins was different from the way they did it. Jesus was like the Apostles, but He was different from them! Please! Keith has surrendered his proposition--period! Close the debate!

(13) Keith says, *A forgiveness of sins...did not negate His humanity,* @ absolutely, but it certainly confirmed that He was using one of "His own peculiarly divine attributes," because the Scribes said, "*Why doth this [man] thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?*"@ (Mark 2:7). Keith argues that since Jesus did not refute the Scribe's deduction that "God...has given such power (to forgive sins jpn) to man" that Christ did not forgive sins by "His own peculiarly divine attribute," (though it was different from the way the apostles did it!), but by divine power God gave to a MAN. A person has to be desperate to prove a point when he appeals to misguided comments of Jesus' enemies. If Keith is willing to accept the

Sharp-Needham Debate

conclusions of Jesus' enemies that God has given MAN the power to forgive sin, therefore Jesus didn't do it by His own power, why will he not also accept the Scribes' conclusion that "God alone can forgive sin," and since Jesus forgave sins, and that different from the way the apostles did it according to Keith, therefore He used one of "His own peculiarly divine attributes"? What's holding you back, Keith? Will you accept the Scribe's deduction that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy?

Third Affirmative - Keith Sharp

Proposition: Resolved: The Scriptures teach that the Son of God, in the days of His flesh, emptied Himself of the use of His own peculiarly divine attributes.

(A1) Thank you for honestly, thoughtfully studying this exchange. Both Brother Needham and Brother Willis have lost loved ones to death during the time these articles were being written. My heart goes out to them, and I pray that the God of all comfort will comfort them in their losses.

(A2) This debate proves 4 points: (1) Jesus was fully human as well as fully divine; (2) our disagreement is over the humanity of Jesus, not His deity; (3) those who accuse me of denying the deity of Christ are grossly inconsistent in that many of them teach the same things I do; and (4) this issue is a result of neo-Calvinism.

Fully Human As Well As Fully Divine

(N3) I spent 3 paragraphs (N5, A2, A3), 408 words, citing 16 verses, explaining and proving that Jesus' Spirit was both human and divine. Yet the Negative, without attempting to answer the arguments, accuses me of assuming without proof that Jesus' Spirit was both human and divine and of preaching my opinions! No, Jesus' Spirit was not half human and half divine. As I stated in both previous affirmatives, He was "fully God and fully man." He had 100% of the human attributes (Hebrews 2:17) but kept 100% of the divine attributes (unused; Hebrews 1:1-4; 13:8). I didn't say we are like Him; I said He was like us. He was both divine and human; we are only human.

(N5) Brother Needham makes my argument. God grew in knowledge because He limited Himself. This did not make Him any less God. Jesus limited Himself to be Man. As a human child He grew in wisdom just as other children (Luke 2:52). Limiting Himself to the use of

Sharp-Needham Debate

human attributes did not make Jesus any less God.

Disagreement Over Humanity Not Deity

(A3) Brother Needham denies Jesus had a human spirit, was tempted to sin, or could have sinned. These are human attributes. He thus inadvertently denies Jesus possessed human nature, an inadvertent denial of His humanity, an antichrist position (1 John 4:3). Hebrews 2:17 and 4:15 seem to be missing from his Bible.

(N9) Of course Jesus had "desire from within and enticement from without." Brother Needham confuses sinful desires with innocent, human desires through which Satan tempts. Jesus "was in all [points] tempted as [we] [are], [yet] without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus was hungry (Matthew 4:1-4). Satan enticed Him with unlawful fulfillment of innocent desire. Thus, Jesus was tempted (James 1:14). He could have turned stones to bread. Jesus could have sinned.

(N10) Because it has members in the conclusion not found in the premises, the Negative's syllogism is invalid. Satan and Herod accepted worship; neither was divine; thus acceptance of worship is not a divine attribute. In accepting worship, Jesus was passive, exercising nothing. God alone has the right to demand worship, a divine prerogative (Deuteronomy 6:13-15). In the days of His flesh Jesus never demanded worship. Jesus, Brother Needham and I all agree that Jesus did everything by delegated, not original, authority (Matthew 28:18; N7 [answer to question 6]).

(N11) The power/authority (*exousia*) Jesus exercised to take up His life was not His own but given to Him by His Father (John 10:18; cf. 5:30; Matthew 28:18).

Sharp's Third Affirmative

(N12) The forgiveness of sins by Jesus and His apostles was parallel in that both used derived, not inherent authority. Jesus received His authority from the Father (John 5:26; Matthew 28:18); the apostles got theirs from Jesus (John 20:21-23). The forgiveness was different in the manner exercised.

(N13) The conclusion I accept is the one Jesus confirmed. Sometimes even the scribes got it right (Matthew 23:1-3). God alone has the inherent right to forgive sins, but He can delegate that authority (Matthew 28:18; John 5:26; 20:21-23).

(A4) Brother Needham concedes I do not deny the deity of Jesus Christ (First Negative, par. 2). None of us denies Jesus' deity. Many implicitly deny His humanity.

Inconsistencies

(N1) The Negative writes, "How could I overlook something I didn't know existed?" He knew by March, 1997 (Neg. 1, Par. 4). Why not debate Brother Adams?

(A5) I asked the Negative, "Did Jesus forgive sins by His own divine authority or by authority derived from the Father?" His answer: "Jesus did everything by authority given Him by the Father (John 5:30)." Amen! All the "power/authority" ("exousia") He used was derived from the Father, not Himself (cf. Matthew 28:18). Did I read something about "Close the debate!"?

(A6) By failing to respond, the Negative conceded this crucial point: "When the Son of God became flesh, He entered a new 'mode of being' and 'existence,' a new 'inner life.'" This means Jesus was changed in Spirit, which Brother Frost denied and Brother Welch affirmed. He implicitly concedes Brother Welch's proposition. But Brother Needham warns of the "Welch heresy." Will Brethren Needham and Frost debate?

Sharp-Needham Debate

(A7) Brother Needham failed to respond to the following important argument:

The Negative equates the divine Spirit of Jesus with His form as God. But He agrees He emptied Himself of this form. Thus, by the Negative argument, He had no divine spirit. But he also denies Jesus had a human spirit. What kind of spirit did He have? Or was He a body with no spirit? Was He a walking dead man?

Either Brother Needham contends that Jesus gave up possession of the divine form, a divine attribute, or he agrees with me (N4). Brother Frost agrees with me that Jesus could not be deity without possession of the divine attributes. Will Brethren Needham and Frost debate?

(A8) I asked, "Must one believe that Jesus used some of his own divine attributes while on earth to be saved?" His answer: "Keith, does one have to believe that Jesus in the flesh used NONE of His Divine attributes to be saved?" I answered this in the first paragraph of my first affirmative:

I am willing to extend the right hand of fellowship to those who believe that Jesus was fully God and fully man and was tempted to sin as a man. For those who believe Jesus sometimes used His own divine attributes while on earth, I think you are mistaken, but since we both agree on His deity and His humanity, our disagreement should not affect our fellowship.

This debate was made necessary because other brethren, not I, drew lines of fellowship over their opinions (Galatians 2:3-5). Brother Needham, please answer the question.

(A9) I asked, "Did Jesus perform miracles by His own divine power or by the Holy Spirit?" His Answer: "By the Holy Spirit (MAT. 12:28; ACTS 10:38)." Brother Willis argues these passages just teach the unity of the Godhead (Guardian of Truth, July 1, 15, 1993). He doesn't tell us why the phrase "by the Spirit of God" means the unity of the Godhead or what He means by the unity of the Godhead. Does He mean the Father, Son, and

Sharp's Third Affirmative

Holy Spirit are manifestations of one divine Being (oneness Pentecostal position) or that the Son worked by power from the Holy Spirit (my position and the plain meaning of the text)? Will Brethren Needham and Willis debate?

(A10) I asked, "Does Jesus' testimony to His own identity prove He used one of His own divine attributes?" His Answer: "No." Brother Willis says yes. He assumes without proof that Jesus' self-knowledge was an extension of His preincarnate awareness (Ibid. March 6, 1997. 24). Again, Brother Needham and I unite in opposition to Brother Willis. Will Brethren Needham and Willis debate?

(N2) If Brother Welch flip flops on this issue, why is every quote Brethren Needham, Frost and others cite taken from 1990 or before? Brother Welch confessed that his concept, not just his words, had been wrong, since he was separating Christ's deity and divinity (Faith & Facts, Jan., 1997. 49). What confession of Brother Welch have Brethren Frost, *et al.* ever accepted? Brethren, do you not realize that "with what judgment you judge, you will be judged" (Matthew 7:2)?

(A11) Brethren who accuse me of teaching heresy disagree with one another on critical points about Jesus. They circulate statements Brother Welch has publicly repented of for years. Several now accuse us of being heretics for teaching the same thing they formerly taught. For example, Brother Frost wrote, "But Jesus emptied Himself, and did not retain the prerogatives of Deity, to come to earth as a man" (**The 'Oneness' Doctrine of Pentecostalism and the Bible Doctrine of the Godhead**, 45). Some brethren need to repent of hatred and the party spirit (Galatians 5:19-21).

Neo-Calvinism

(N6) The Negative still has the "have to" wrong. Since God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), He had to tell the truth about Jesus' sinlessness. Jesus' sinlessness was the cause; God's statement the effect, not vice versa. Think. How could Jesus use free will not to sin if He couldn't sin? I had a

Sharp-Needham Debate

pet dog named Dixie. Dixie couldn't whistle Dixie. She had no choice. I neither called Brother Needham a "Calvinist" nor "antichrist." But his argument is Calvinistic and his conclusion, if logically followed, would lead one to be antichrist by denying the humanity of Jesus. I may not be expert in Calvinism, but I quoted Presbyterian theologians defending Calvinism.

(A12) I asked, "Does man have to sin?" His answer: "No." In the March, 1991 **Gospel Truths**, Brother J.T. Smith ran and endorsed an article by Brother Steve Cawthon affirming man has to sin to fulfill scripture. The argument that man has to sin so as to fulfill scripture is parallel to Brother Needham's argument that so as to fulfill scripture Christ could not sin. Both arguments are Calvinistic predestination. Why doesn't Brother Needham agree with Brethren Cawthon and Smith? The "have to sin" issue is the root of the humanity/deity issue. When a brother challenged me in 1985 to name one man who had ever lived sinlessly, I replied, "Jesus Christ." His answer: Jesus doesn't count since He is the Son of God. I replied, "But He was tempted as a man." Neither these brethren nor Brother Needham believe Jesus was tempted to sin as a man. Hebrews 4:15 is still not in their Bibles.

(A13) I asked, "May a sincere Christian be forgiven of a sin of ignorance without coming to a knowledge of that sin and repenting of it?" His answer: "I don't know, that's God's business. I plead God's law and leave the rest to Him." Why didn't Brother Needham tell us what God's law is? Brother J.T. Smith wrote, "We will be forgiven of our sins when we repent of known sins and confess them, ask God to be merciful to us as sinners and forgive us of sins of which we may not be aware" (**Torch**, September 1988, 5). Brother Smith also wrote, "repentance and conversion involve a change of will resulting in a reformation of life" (**Smith-Lovelady Debate**, 42). Thus, Brother Smith promises

Sharp's Third Affirmative

forgiveness of sins of ignorance devoid of biblical repentance. Brother Spears, a **Gospel Truths** staff writer, affirmed the continuous cleansing position and defended Mark Nitz in his fellowship of the Christian Church (**The Complete Dunaway-Spears Exchange**). Continuous cleansing (**The Sower**, January, 1982) led to "have to sin" (Ibid. May/June, 1985, 4), and those who teach continuous cleansing have led the attacks on John Welch, Keith Sharp and others, because we teach that a Christian who sins in ignorance must come to a knowledge of his sins, repent, confess his sins, and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:18-23; 1 John 1:9).

(A14) Some who do not accept loose views on sin and fellowship have nonetheless joined the attack on those who write in **Faith & Facts**. Brethren, whether inadvertently or intentionally, you have become "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for those who teach continuous cleansing. "In the day that you stood on the other side...Even you [were] as one of them" (Obadiah 11).

Conclusion

(A15) I have no animosity toward Brethren Needham, Willis, Adams, Frost, Smith, *et. al.* I have looked up to and admired them for their works' sake. If they believe that Jesus is fully God, fully man and was tempted as a man, then we should not be divided over the nature of Jesus Christ. I think those who insist Jesus used His own divine attributes while on earth are mistaken, but since we agree on His deity and His humanity, our disagreement should not affect our fellowship.

(A16) The Son of God, in the days of His flesh, was God as He is and man as He ought to be. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit [be] with you all. Amen" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Third Negative - James P Needham

My thanks to the editor for printing this debate in a single issue of the magazine, and to brother Sharp for his participation, and attitude.

Keith says the debate has proven four things,

(1) that Jesus is fully human and fully divine. I thought that was a given. I've not known any brother in my lifetime, that denied this before John Welch.

(2) Keith says the debate has proven that our disagreement is over the humanity of Jesus, not His Deity. If "our" includes Keith and his fellow-travellers, it is not true because the debates with John Welch have been over his denial of the Jesus' Deity. In fact this whole controversy was spawned by John's saying that Jesus was "an ordinary guy like you and me." He has apologized for his wording, but not his concept, Keith's claim to the contrary notwithstanding. In my humble opinion Keith labors hard to salvage John from his error, not by rebuking him, but by trying to find a position that doesn't sound as blasphemous, but essentially amounts to the same thing. Just what is the essential difference between Jesus' not having His Divine Attributes, and having them but not using them? This is an odd, awkward and an unscriptural position.

(3) He says the debate has proven that those who accuse him of denying the deity of Christ are inconsistent because they teach the same thing he does. Keith often is assumptive and ambiguous. It is difficult to get his point. As it stands, the above statement is not true.

(4) He says he has proven that "this issue is a result of neo-Calvinism." This is pure nonsense! I said previously that

Needham's Third Negative

Keith doesn't seem to know what Calvinism is. He claims he does because he quoted a Calvinian creed! Some proof! His quoted creed doesn't say what I said, nor does it mean it. I challenge Keith or any of his fellow-travellers to name any brother that took their position before John Welch did in 1990. Were all our brethren previous to John Welch neo-Calvinists? Neo-Calvinism has become a buzz word that these brethren throw around indiscriminately. It is a prejudicial false charge.

Keith thinks the Father's use of His omniscience to foresee and foreknow that Jesus would use His free moral agency to choose not to sin, therefore could not sin without making God a liar, is neo-Calvinism! I showed this is exactly what the Bible teaches, so Keith must think God is a neo-Calvinist! During the last almost 50 years I have preached against Calvinism among some of the most rabid Calvinists in the world (the Dutch Reformed) , I have debated Calvinists, and studied with them in their homes. I have devoured their creeds, and researched their literature, and I don't believe or teach one thing that is a 42nd cousin to anything peculiar to Calvinism and for Keith to insinuate that I do is a travesty on truth, comes close to an insult, and reflects his lack of knowledge of Calvinism.

Keith charges that I deny that Jesus was tempted to sin as a man? He cites Heb. 4:15, and wonders if it is in my Bible. I wonder if my explanation of this passage was in Keith's copy of my negative. I know it is mine, and it was in his when they left my desk!

Keith says he proved that Jesus' spirit was "fully human and fully divine." Keith can't make a single argument without meeting himself coming back or colliding with John Welch whose heresy he is trying to defend. Keith should have shown just how this works out. The body of Jesus, according to Keith, was inhabited by only one spirit which was "fully human and fully divine," but the "fully Divine" part was inactive. If it was "fully human and fully divine," then your good friend John Welch says that's 200% and an absurdity. Are you going to debate John? If Jesus' spirit was "fully human and fully divine" that is equal to two fully independent spirits. The "fully Divine" spirit had to be c

Sharp-Needham Debate

apable of "fully" functioning, and the "fully Spirit" certainly was unless Jesus' body was animated by a half spirit. Keith doesn't like the two-spirit position, but his position logically leads to it. If the "fully Divine" Spirit was inactive during His earthly sojourn, then He was animated by a "fully human" Spirit? Two full spirits: $1 + 1 = 2$ spirits, or is it $1/2 + 1/2 = 1$ spirit? No, it is one fully Divine Spirit that acted like a human spirit when it was appropriate and harmonized with Jesus' earthly mission as servant and Saviour. Will Keith deny that Jesus had the power to so do?

Keith says Jesus "had 100% of the human attributes (Heb. 2:17) , but kept 100% of the divine attributes (unused: Hebrews 1:1-4; 13:8) ." This is what he says, but I proved that Jesus used Divine Attributes in having the power to effect His own resurrection, accepting worship, and He had power on earth to forgive sins (Mark 2:10). Keith replies that Jesus never demanded worship but was passive in it. So what? The Father demanded it (Heb. 1:6). Should Jesus have refused what His Father commanded? Was

He not worthy of what His Father commanded? Is that Keith's point? His replies on this point insinuate that something was inappropriate about worshipping Jesus, and that it was equal to worshipping Herod! Where did the Father ever command the worship of Herod, or an apostle, or any other object but Deity? If God commanded all His angels to worship Jesus in the flesh does not prove Jesus used a Divine Attribute, I am at a loss to know what would. All I needed to defeat Keith's proposition is proof that Jesus used just one Divine Attribute. I have proven that He used at least three! Keith even admitted that Christ's forgiving sins was different from the apostles! That was a fatal admission! He thus surrendered his proposition! He tried to patch it up, but his patch doesn't stick.

Needham's Third Negative

Keith thinks my admission that Jesus limited Himself in that He grew in knowledge, is making HIS argument. All sensible Bible students know that Deity sometimes limits Itself; to deny that It can do so is to limit the power of Deity. I don't even deny that Jesus could have limited all His divine attributes as Keith argues, but the question is, DID HE? I have proven that He did not, and Keith has failed to prove that He did, so his proposition fails. Jesus did not allow any of His Divine Attributes to sully His earthly mission. I showed that the Father limited His knowledge in commanding Abraham to offer Isaac, thus the limitation of knowledge doesn't prove Jesus used no Divine Attribute.

Keith contends that since Jesus did all His works by delegated authority, this proves He used none of His own Divine Attributes. No, it only proves the hierarchy of the Godhead. The Father has primary authority, Christ and the Holy Spirit have delegated authority. If Christ's using delegated authority proves He deactivated all His own Divine Attributes, it also proves the same for the Holy Spirit since He too exercised only delegated authority (John 16:13,14;14:26)? And what about the apostles? They too had only delegated authority? Does this mean they emptied themselves of the use of all their human attributes? What proves too much proves nothing!

Keith's final affirmative is largely wasted paper, ink and effort. All his quibbles and quotes about some supposed disagreements I might have with this brother or that, cut no ice with me, and prove his desperation and that he has a party spirit which is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). I have not consulted with any party bosses (since I know none) in preparation for this debate. Keith knows more about the beliefs of the brethren he mentions than I do. I have answered his quibble once and for all. I said I would be glad to discuss the Bible with any brother under honorable circumstances. This reply alone answers about half of his third affirmative.

Keith claims to be working for unity while fomenting division. He has unsuccessfully tried to put me in some party, but he has failed. I don't fit into parties--never have. I am my own man and I do my own thinking. If he wants unity, then let him purge himself of the party spirit.

Sharp-Needham Debate

Keith is anxious for me to answer his question about whether one must believe Jesus used some of His Divine Attributes while on earth to be saved. Keith is playing to the grandstand here. He has said that since both of us believe in the Deity and humanity of Jesus our differences should not affect our fellowship. His magnanimity may not be as warm and fuzzy as it appears since he is the one who challenged for a debate. When my comments on the Welch heresy appeared in this periodical, Keith jumped to the defense of Welch and challenged for a debate. His question is like the sectarians' asking, "Do you think that just you and your little bunch are going to be saved." It is prejudicial. I have proven that Jesus used some of His own Divine Attributes while on earth. Whether one has to believe that to be saved is a matter for God to decide. I don't try to tend to God's business. I plead His law, and leave the rest to Him. Keith wondered why I didn't give the law. I thought he knew it! A better question is, can one be saved who sows discord among brethren and divides churches with false doctrines (Proverbs 6:19), then tries to cover his tracks with bogus apologies. Keith preaches unity while sowing discord! The conservative churches are not growing outwardly, and are being devoured from within by factions and parties and foolish controversies.

Keith's defense of Welch at the expense of truth and facts is obvious. He has not learned, seemingly, that we should not think of men above that which is written (1 Cor. 4:6). He says John confessed he had been wrong not just in word but in concept. Then why did he say in his most recent debate with Gene Frost, *"I'll apologize to you for any word I've used. Fine, let's get rid of it. But, Brother Frost, I believe the same thing, I haven't shifted."* (Emphasis mine, jpn). (Frost-Welch Debate, p. 91, 4th par. left column, June 1995). He asked which Welch apology has Frost ever accepted? Welch's apologies are hard to accept because he repudiates them before one has time to accept them! Gene tried to accept the apology Welch made following the Louisville debate, but the ink wasn't dry before Welch

Needham's Third Negative

publicly was repudiating it. (see article by Gene Frost in Gospel Truths, January 16, 1997, p. 16-19 Cf. His follow-up article June issue p. 15-17).

Conclusion: This debate has been frustrating to me. I am disgruntled that at this late date we are spending our time and energy debating the nature of our blessed Saviour while the world goes to hell in a handbasket! I cannot understand why or how those brethren who are standing with and defending the Welch doctrine cannot see that he has made false apologies, and supposed repentances, only to continue to defend his original error. If he has changed the substance of the position he took in his Shively, KY sermon, and has repented of both his words and his concept, why does he continue to defend his original position and deny that he has "shifted"? What are all the debates about if we all agree?

Keith seems to feel that the brethren opposed to the Welch doctrine are hard-hearted, mean-spirited, and hell-bent on hitting on John Welch and his fellow-travellers. Nonsense. Gene Frost's article trying to accept Welch's latest "apology" was a genuine offer of his heart and hand, and I am sure many others, were delighted to think this might end this foolish controversy. He personally wrote Welch's defenders and asked them to commit to Welch's supposed change, only to receive not a single reply. Before the ink was dry in Gene's article, Welch publicly was denying on his supposed change and accusing others of stretching his apology beyond his intention.