

FOUNDATIONAL PAPER

Jesus Is Fully Human and Fully God

Here Is How - and Why It Does Not Mean a Second God

Written for those asked about Jesus by Muslim friends

*A companion paper to
Understanding the Nature of Humanity:
An Anthropological Framework for Christian Doctrine*

Greg Warnock

MISSIONARY & APOLOGETICS

Fully Human and Fully God Series

Contents

Jesus Is Fully Human and Fully God	1
Here Is How — and Why It Does Not Mean a Second God	1
Proposition	1
Summary	2
A Note to the Reader	2
1. The Question, As It Is Actually Asked	3
2. The Model, in Brief — and Why It Holds	3
3. Where We Already Agree	8
4. The Human Spirit Is Created	8
5. The One Exception	9
6. Created and Begotten	12
7. The Virginal Conception	12
8. One God — Where We Both Begin	13
9. A Word About the Word “Son”	14
10. Why the Savior Must Be Uncreated in Spirit	14
11. And Why He Must Also Be Created as Man	16
12. The Incarnation Does Not End	18
13. On What Remains Hidden	19
14. What Makes a Christian a Christian	19
Closing	21
Glossary of Key Terms	22

Jesus Is Fully Human and Fully God

Here Is How — and Why It Does Not Mean a Second God

Written for those asked about Jesus by Muslim friends

A companion paper to “Understanding the Nature of Humanity: An Anthropological Framework for Christian Doctrine”

Greg Warnock

Proposition

In every human being who has ever lived, the spirit is **created** — the created image of God, and the seat of moral volition and intuition. In Jesus of Nazareth alone, the spirit is **uncreated**: God Himself, eternal, never brought into being. That uncreated Spirit was united, at the moment of the virginal conception, to a body and soul derived entirely from Mary and from the covenant line of David and Abraham.

He is therefore fully God and fully man, in one undivided person. And because nothing was added to God in the Incarnation, the confession of Christ’s deity introduces no second god beside the One.

Summary

Our Muslim friend usually puts two questions to you at once — *how can Jesus be God*, and *how is that not shirk*. Both are asked across a foundation the two of you already share: that God is one. The Christian answer is not that a second God exists, but that the God they both confess took a human body and soul to Himself — and saying that early changes the conversation. Behind both lies a prior question about what a human being is, and neither can be answered until we have said plainly what a person is made of.

Both traditions describe the human being in three terms — body, self, and a God-given spirit. Both hold that this spirit is created by God, not a fragment of God's own being. That agreement is broad, and it should be established before anything is contested.

From there, two points of disagreement remain.

First: is that created spirit corrupted? Islam holds that the *rūḥ* remains untouched and the *fiṭra* is pure, damaged only from outside — and that God pardons whom He wills, directly, needing no mediator. This model holds that sin resides in the spirit itself, in the moral faculty God created, so that pardon forgives the debt without repairing the instrument. The necessity of a *divine* Savior follows from this and from nothing else.

Second: is there one exception to the createdness of the human spirit? We say there is exactly one. In Him, body and soul were created — which is how He could be born and how He could die — while the Spirit was eternal God, which is why death could not hold Him.

Stated this way, the charge of *shirk* dissolves without recourse to a single analogy. We are not adding a partner to God. We are saying God took to Himself a human body and a human soul. Two monotheists, disagreeing about the nature of the one God — which is a conversation, where an accusation of polytheism is not.

There is a third difference, treated at the end of section 10. It is not an argument but an observation, and in practice it moves more people than either point above: in Islam, love is something God *has* and grants to those who qualify. Scripture says God *is* love, and proved it toward those who had not qualified and could not.

A Note to the Reader

The person asking you this question is usually not looking for a debate. He is watching to see whether you will handle the oneness of God carelessly. Answer slowly, and answer with respect for what he already believes, because a great deal of it is true.

Nothing in this paper requires you to tell your friend he is foolish. It requires you to show him where, precisely, the two of you part company — and to be honest that the parting is narrow and deep rather than wide and shallow.

1. The Question, As It Is Actually Asked

It arrives as one question but contains two:

1. **How can Jesus be God?**
2. **If He is, how are you not committing *shirk* — assigning partners to God?**

These need different answers. The first is about the Incarnation. The second is about the oneness of God, and it is the one your friend cares about most. If you answer only the first, he will hear evasion.

This paper answers the second question first. Until it is clear that you are arguing *from* the oneness of God rather than around it, nothing else can be heard.

2. The Model, in Brief — and Why It Holds

Everything that follows rests on a particular account of what a person is made of. If you have read *Understanding the Nature of Humanity: An Anthropological Framework for Christian Doctrine*, this will be familiar ground. If you have not, do not take it on trust. Here is the case in short, so that nothing later in this paper asks you to accept a conclusion you were never shown the reason for.

Scripture uses three terms, and treats them as distinct.

“May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless.” — 1 Thessalonians 5:23

“For the word of God is living and active... piercing to the division of soul and of spirit.”
— Hebrews 4:12

The common objection deserves an honest answer: many hold that *soul* and *spirit* are two words for one thing, and it is true that some passages use them interchangeably. But interchangeable use in some places does not erase distinction in others. Hebrews says the word of God divides between them. A thing cannot be divided from itself.

The older definitions no longer hold.

For most of Christian history, *spirit* was defined as the rational mind — reason and intellect — and that was taken to be the image of God in man, because reason was assumed to be uniquely human. The soul, on that account, was the animal nature: drives, instinct, appetite.

That assumption no longer stands. Since the 1970s, research in animal cognition has documented higher animals manufacturing tools, solving novel problems, recognizing themselves in mirrors, attending to their dead, and maintaining group-specific traditions that differ between populations of the same species.¹

Researchers have also found fairness-like responses — capuchins and chimpanzees refusing a reward when a partner receives a better one. The field generally describes these as *precursors* of morality: reactions to one’s own disadvantage rather than judgments that an act is wrong as such. That distinction is the whole point, and it is worth conceding the evidence plainly rather than avoiding it.

If reason, emotion, and ordinary choice are shared in some measure with animals, they cannot be what marks the divine image. Something else must — and the candidate that remains unobserved

anywhere else is the capacity to know an act is *wrong* and choose against one's own advantage because of it.

¹ For a current survey rather than a reading list, see the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entries "Animal Cognition" and "Animal Social Cognition." Landmark studies include Gallup (1970) on mirror self-recognition; Whiten et al. (1999, 2005) on chimpanzee culture; Brosnan & de Waal (2003) on inequity aversion; McComb et al. (2000) on elephant responses to the dead; and Seed, Call & Emery on causal reasoning in corvids and primates. The fuller case, with the earlier literature, is in the thesis.

So the terms move.

	Contents	Moral status	Duration
Body	physical	amoral	mortal
Soul	reason, emotion, appetite, ordinary choice	amoral	mortal; awaits resurrection
Spirit	moral volition and intuition	moral	immortal

Intuition here means the immediate perception of truth apart from sense or reasoning — the faculty by which a person responds to moral conviction. It is not a refined instinct. No animal has been observed choosing against its own advantage because a thing was *wrong*.

Three consequences carry the rest of this paper.

First — and this is the claim most easily passed over — a human being is body, soul, and spirit together.

All physical characteristics are in the body. All rational, emotional, and amoral faculties are in the soul — flesh and blood, reason, feeling, appetite, ordinary choice. But those two do not exhaust what a human being is. The spirit is the third, and it is no less human than the other two: the created image of God in a person, the God-ward center by which he was made to know his Maker. To be human is to be all three.

The spirit is created — God's image, made in the first man and inherited with body and soul from one generation to the next. It is not something God adds fresh to each person at conception, but the part, received with our common nature, by which a person may know Him and hold fellowship with Him. It is not an addition laid on top of a humanity already complete without it; it is part of what it *is* to be human. A creature without a spirit would be missing something proper to man, not merely something optional.

Hold this together, because the rest of the argument depends on it: to be human is to be **body, soul, and spirit** — all three, none of them optional. What differs from one person to another is not *whether* there is a spirit, but *what that spirit is* — and section 5 turns on exactly that.

This is not a convenience invented for the sake of Christology. It follows from where the faculties sit, and it was argued in the thesis long before it was ever aimed at this question. But it does carry the Incarnation, and section 5 will show how.

Second, the soul is amoral. What you eat, what you wear, whether you are quick-tempered or slow, clever or plain — none of these are moral acts. They can have moral consequences, and a

person is responsible to weigh those. But the faculties themselves are morally neutral, as they are in any animal.

Third, sin therefore resides in the spirit. Only what is moral can sin. Scripture locates culpability precisely there:

“To one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.” — James 4:17

Not in appetite. Not in temperament. In knowing and choosing — which is the spirit’s work, and nothing else’s.

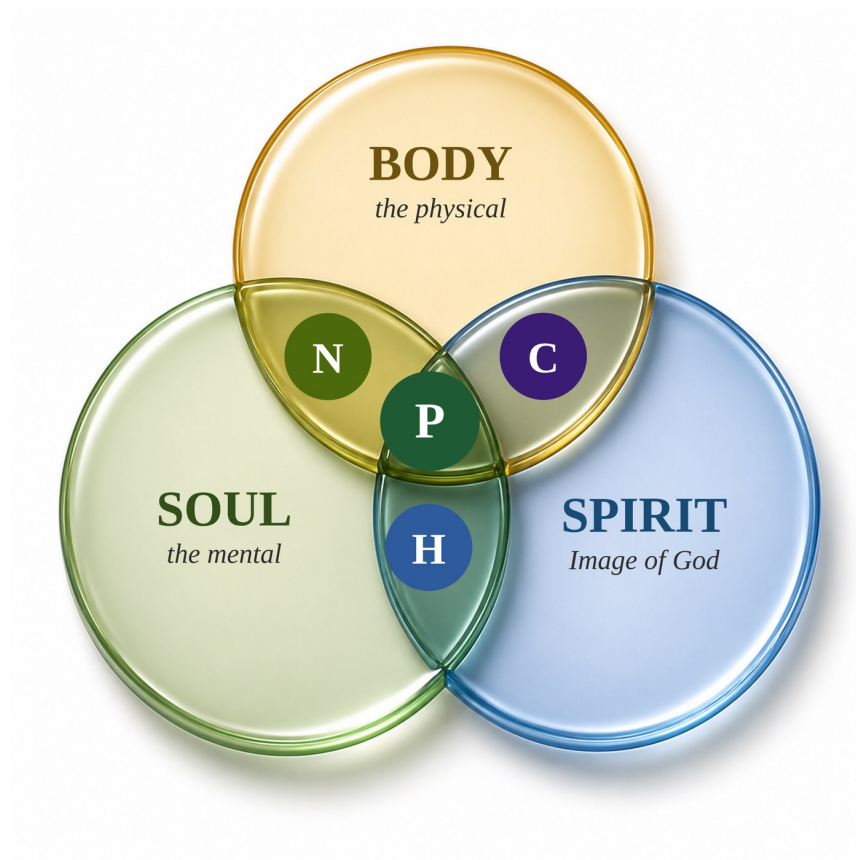
Two kinds of willing, then — and both are real. The soul has a will — the **human will**, which the model also calls the **natural will**, the will of a person’s *nature* (the region N, where soul and body meet): rational and emotional, choosing among options for its own ends, as each of us does in deciding what to eat or how to answer — a choosing that is in itself *amoral*, and shared in some measure with the animals. (The two names are interchangeable here, and both stand within the creed — the councils’ own “natural human will” is exactly this.) The spirit has a will of another kind altogether: *moral* volition, the capacity to weigh a choice against the good and against God, and to answer for it. These two meet in the **heart**, where soul and spirit conjoin — the spirit says *this is right*, and the soul answers *how?*, or *I am afraid*, or *I do not want to*. There the decision is made; and from there it goes out into life — the amoral matters showing in a person’s **nature**, the moral ones in his **conduct**. Hold onto this, because it is exactly what we will see in Christ at Gethsemane.

The three faculties meet, and the meeting-places have names. Picture the person as three overlapping circles — body, soul, and spirit — one life, not three stacked compartments. Where they overlap, something particular happens, and the model names each region. This is worth learning before the conversation begins, because it lets you *point* at where the trouble is and where the cure must reach, rather than only asserting it.

- **Nature (N)** — where **body and soul** overlap: the creaturely life a person shares in some measure with the animals — appetite, instinct, temperament, the ordinary amoral will. This is the region of the *natural will*.
- **Heart (H)** — where **soul and spirit** overlap: the inward place where the spirit’s moral sense meets the soul’s reason and feeling. It is not itself the seat of morality; it is where the two wills engage and the decision is fought out — *this is right* set against *I am afraid* or *I do not want to*. The heart is where a person is won or lost.
- **Conduct (C)** — where **body and spirit** overlap: the moral will made visible — what a person actually does, where holiness, or its opposite, is seen by others.
- **Person (P)** — the center, where all three meet: the one, whole, undivided human being.

The Human Person — As Created

Neo-Trichotomy Model



Body, soul, and spirit — one whole person.

■ Body — the physical	● N Nature — body + soul
■ Soul — mind, feeling, will	● H Heart — soul + spirit
■ Spirit — the image of God	● C Conduct — body + spirit
	● P Person — all three

Figure 1. The human person as created — Adam. Body, soul, and spirit as one whole person; the three meeting-places named — Nature (N), Heart (H), Conduct (C) — and the Person (P) at the center.

Keep these regions in view, because the whole conversation ahead runs through them: sin will be seated in the spirit and spread outward across them; the cross will reach the spirit at the root; and what Christ restores, He restores from that center out.

Note the order of the damage, because it returns at the cross. What is inherited in body and soul is *corruptibility* — mortality, and the capacity to be corrupted — not corruption already accomplished. Being amoral, body and soul have no sin of their own; their disorder is derivative, working *outward*

from the severed spirit into the soul and at last the body. Sin is seated in the spirit; from that center it spreads.

And this is the consequence that matters most. Because the spirit is the faculty by which a person is joined to God, damage there is not merely a moral defect. It is a severed connection:

“Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you.” — Isaiah 59:2

“You were dead in your trespasses and sins... alienated from the life of God.” — Ephesians 2:1; 4:18

And the damage is inherited. This is not a conclusion drawn from experience; Scripture states it directly.

“Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death spread to all men.” — Romans 5:12

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” — Psalm 51:5

David is not describing what the world did to him. He is describing his condition prior to any act of his own. A person does not acquire this by living badly; he arrives with it, as a son of Adam.

Hold these two together — *separated* and *inherited* — because between them they rule out every remedy a person could supply. You cannot discipline your way out of a condition you were born into, and you cannot behave your way back across a severed connection.

And the soul is mortal. This runs against common teaching, so it is worth stating plainly and showing:

“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” — 1 Corinthians 15:44

“The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.” — Ecclesiastes 12:7

The spirit returns to God at death. The soul, like the body, awaits the resurrection. That distinction will matter a great deal when we come to the cross.

A word about what a model is. This is a theoretical model, not ultimate truth. It is a tool for making doctrine comprehensible, and it should be replaced the moment a better one appears. Nothing in this paper asks you to treat a diagram as revelation.

The full argument — with the research, the sources, and the comparison against the traditional dichotomy — is set out in *The Nature of Man: A Paradigm Revolution* (George Fox College, 1987) and its revision, *Understanding the Nature of Humanity: An Anthropological Framework for Christian Doctrine* (2026). What is above is the compressed version, sufficient to follow what comes next.

3. Where We Already Agree

Begin here. It runs longer than most Christians expect.

Your friend already holds an understanding of the human person with three terms in it:

Arabic	Meaning	Neo-Trichotomy
<i>jasad</i> / <i>jism</i> <i>nafs</i>	the body, formed from clay the self — appetite, ego, intellect; what must be disciplined	Body Soul
<i>rūḥ</i>	the spirit, breathed in by God; what connects a person to Him	Spirit

Of the *rūḥ*, the Qur'an says God breathed into Adam of His spirit (15:29). That language will sound immediately familiar:

“Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” — Genesis 2:7

You do not have to teach your friend this structure. He already has it. You are not importing a foreign framework; you are speaking in categories he was raised inside.

4. The Human Spirit Is Created

Islamic teaching holds that the *rūḥ* is created — honored by association with God, but not a piece of God Himself. To say otherwise would be *shirk*.

Christians say exactly the same thing.

The human spirit is created. It is the *image* of God in a person, not a fragment of God's own being:

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” — Genesis 1:26

In the image. Made. Fashioned. A creature bearing a likeness — never a portion of the Creator broken off and distributed.

And the likeness is located where section 2 placed it. Not in reason, which we share with the animals, but in the moral and intuitive faculty that no animal has shown. This matters for your friend, because it is the same place his own tradition puts the *rūḥ*: the part breathed in, the part that connects a person to God.

Say this out loud, because your friend may assume Christians believe otherwise. We do not. Every human spirit that has ever existed was created and belongs to the order of created things.

The Qur'an itself treats the *rūḥ* as a matter largely withheld from us — of the affair of the Lord, of which mankind has been given little knowledge (17:85). That is not a wall. It is an open question, on the record, in the book your friend trusts.

5. The One Exception

Christians make one claim, and only one, that our friend does not make:

In every human being who has ever lived, the spirit was created. In Jesus of Nazareth, it was not.

He had a body — He hungered (Matt. 4:2), grew tired (John 4:6), thirsted (John 19:28), and died (Matt. 27:50). He had a soul — He reasoned, He wept (John 11:35), He was overwhelmed with sorrow (Matt. 26:38). Body and soul, entirely and without reduction.

But His spirit was never created. It always was.

“Before Abraham was born, I am.” — John 8:58

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh.” — John 1:1, 14

We are made *in* the image. He *is* the image (Col. 1:15). We bear a created likeness; He is the uncreated original.

That is what makes Him divine, and that is what makes us creatures.

Now follow the line from Adam, because it settles the objection before it is raised.

In Adam: God formed a body, gave it a soul, and created a spirit directly in His own image — made perfect, yet corruptible, for God made him free — the whole man in all three, the third being the created image of God and the capacity for fellowship with Him.

From Adam: we inherit all three — body, soul, and a spirit still bearing His image, though corrupted, and cut off from fellowship with God (Isaiah 59:2, Romans 5:12).

In Christ: the body and the soul are inherited exactly as ours are, through Mary and the covenant line of David and Abraham — whole and entire, nothing substituted, supplied from elsewhere, or left out. **And He has a spirit too, filling the third place as it does in every human being. His body and soul are complete and His spirit is truly there; He lacks nothing a human has. The single difference lies in what that spirit is.**

His spirit alone was neither created nor inherited. It is God.

And this is precisely why nothing has been subtracted from His manhood. His body and soul are whole and entire, inherited from Mary as ours are; and the third place — the spirit — is not empty but filled by God the Son Himself. He is not a divine mind operating a human shell. He is a man — as human as you are, lacking nothing that makes a man a man — in whom the spirit is God Himself. Having a spirit makes Him fully human; that spirit being uncreated makes Him God.

Be precise, then, about what occupies that third place in Him, because this is where the model is most easily misread. In a human being, the spirit holds one created faculty — moral volition and intuition, the created image of God. **In Christ it is not a faculty at all.** It is not a superior human spirit, not a perfected one, and not an uninherited copy of ours. It is God, entire and undiminished, lacking nothing that God is.

“In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” — Colossians 2:9

This also settles a question that would otherwise remain open. He inherited a body and a soul from Mary, as any son of Adam does. He inherited nothing further — because in that third place

there was no created spirit to receive the inheritance. There was God, who was never separated from Himself.

One Person — and the Part That Changes

the human model, the spirit through its story, and the Person of Christ

THE HUMAN PERSON



Body, soul, and spirit — one whole person. The spirit is God's image in you, created in Adam and inherited with body and soul.

THE SPIRIT ALONE, THROUGH THE STORY



THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

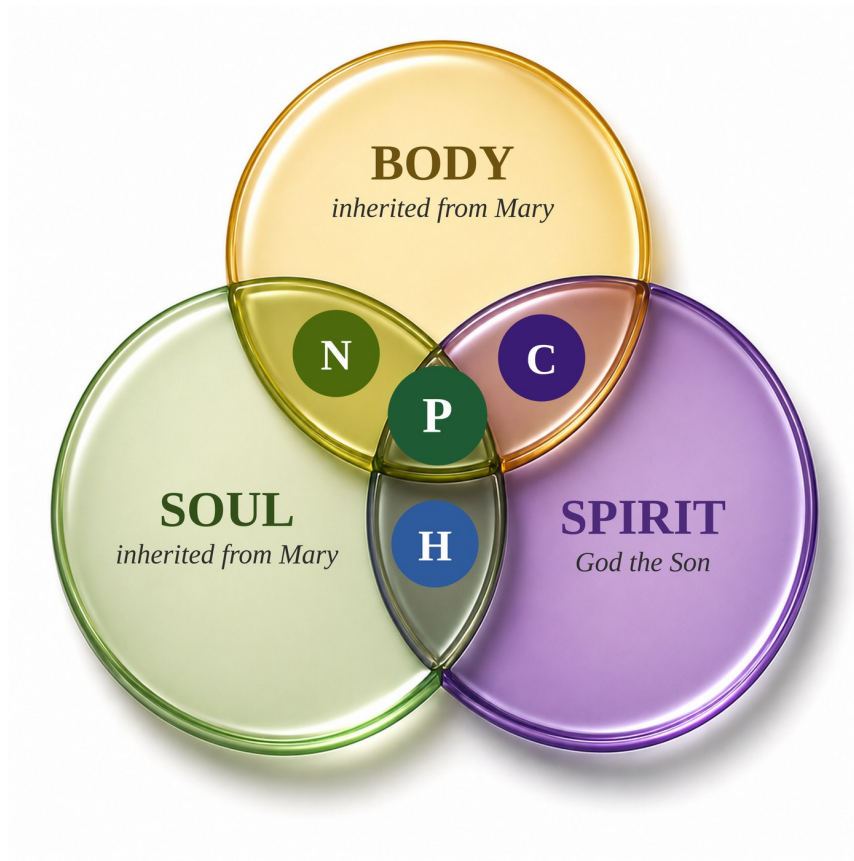


His body and soul are inherited from Mary, whole and entire; His spirit alone is neither created nor inherited — it is God the Son. Having a spirit makes Him fully human; that spirit being uncreated makes Him God.

Figure 2. One person, and the part that changes — the human body/soul/spirit model, the spirit alone through its three states (created, severed, restored), and the Person of Christ. In every human condition the spirit is a created thing, inherited with body and soul; only in Jesus is it neither created nor inherited.

The Person of Jesus Christ

Fully God — Fully Human



Body and soul from Mary; the spirit is God the Son.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Body — the physical | Nature — body + soul |
| Soul — mind, feeling, will | Heart — soul + spirit |
| Spirit — God the Son | Conduct — body + spirit |
| | Person — all three |

Figure 3. The Incarnation. The same whole person, structurally identical to Figure 1 — a true human body and soul inherited from Mary — but the spirit-place is neither created nor inherited: it is God the Son (shown in purple, reserved for Him alone).

6. Created and Begotten

Your friend will ask whether Jesus was created. The honest answer has two parts, because the two words point at different things in Him.

His body and soul were created. They came into being in time, in Mary, as every human body and soul comes into being. This is why the Gospels open with genealogies. He is son of David, son of Abraham, seed of the woman. Truly one of us.

His spirit was not created. Not made in Mary, not supplied at the conception, not brought into being at all. *Begotten* — which in the ancient creeds is not an event but a relation: from the Father's own being, not brought out of nothing. It has no date.

The creed's phrase is exact: **begotten, not made.**

7. The Virginal Conception

Scripture gives the fact and withholds the mechanism, and we should do the same.

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." — Luke 1:35

The word rendered *overshadow* is the word used of the cloud settling upon the tabernacle. It was chosen precisely because it is not a word about consorting.

The humanity was Mary's own. There was no physical engagement and no divine genetic contribution — the miracle is that she conceived, and that the eternal Spirit was united to that life at its beginning. Not joined afterward to a child already living, but present from the first instant, so that there was never a moment when that humanity existed apart from the Word.

This follows the pattern Scripture has used from the beginning: material, and then the breath of God. Paul draws the comparison himself:

"The first man Adam became a living soul; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit... The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven." — 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47

Irenaeus pressed the parallel further in *Against Heresies*: Adam was formed from virgin soil, Christ from a virgin womb.

God could have formed a second Adam from the soil of Israel. He chose Mary's line instead — because covenant runs through lineage, and a fresh creation would have been human but not the *promised* one.

A terminological caution. This is the **Virginal Conception**, not the Immaculate Conception. The latter is the Catholic doctrine concerning *Mary's own* conception, defined in 1854. Confusing the two costs credibility on the first page.

And a caution on mechanism. Someone will eventually ask how an embryo from Mary alone could be male. We do not hold a mechanism, so we do not defend one. Scripture does not supply it, and doctrine tethered to biology inherits every future revision of biology.

8. One God — Where We Both Begin

Before the charge is answered, something should be said that is too rarely said at all, and said as a first article rather than a defence.

When Christians say that Jesus is God, they are not naming a second God. They are saying He is the *same* God — the one God of the Scriptures, the God of Abraham and of Moses. The Incarnation is not a doctrine about another deity appearing alongside the first. It is a doctrine about what the one God did.

Say that before anything else, and say it as an affirmation rather than a denial. **We are monotheists** — not reluctantly, not with qualifications, not as a claim we hope will pass inspection. The oneness of God is the foundation of the faith, exactly as it is the foundation of your friend's.

He confesses that there is no god but God. We confess it in the oldest words our Scripture has:

“Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.” — Deuteronomy 6:4

And this is worth saying to him slowly, because he may never have heard it: when Jesus was asked which commandment is the greatest, He did not offer anything new. He recited that line.

“The foremost is: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one Lord.” — Mark 12:29

The man who asked Him agreed aloud that God is one and there is no other, and Jesus told him he had answered wisely. The rest of the New Testament keeps the same footing — that there is no God but one (1 Corinthians 8:4), that God is one (1 Timothy 2:5), and that to believe God is one is to believe well (James 2:19).

So the question between the two of you was never whether God is one. You both begin there. The question is narrower and more interesting: what Christians mean when they say that Jesus is God — and the answer is that they are not pointing to another God, but to the same one.

This is why John 8:58 matters more than it first appears. When Jesus said *before Abraham was born, I am*, He was not announcing a new deity. He was taking to Himself the name spoken at the burning bush. The claim is identity with the one God, not addition to Him.

Your friend will not grant that it can. That is a real disagreement and it should not be smoothed over. But it is a disagreement between two monotheists about the nature of the one God — not between a monotheist and someone who counts gods.

Now the charge itself can be answered directly, and without a single analogy.

Shirk means assigning partners to God — counting a second deity alongside the first. Your friend assumes that is what Christians do. It is not.

We are not saying a man became God. We are not saying God took a partner, begot a second god, or divided Himself into pieces. We are not saying a further God appeared. We are saying that **the one God — the same God of Abraham, of Moses, and of the prophets — took to Himself a human body and a human soul.**

He did not become two, and He did not divide. The God who was one before the Incarnation is the God who is one after it: nothing was added to Him. A body and a soul were added to *our* world, and He took them up.

Do not reach for the familiar illustrations here — the egg, water and ice and steam, the sun and its light and heat. Every one describes God as assembled from parts, which is precisely the error your friend is accusing you of. They confirm his objection rather than answer it.

And do not map body, soul, and spirit onto Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This model describes *human* beings. It is not a picture of the Trinity, and using it that way turns a careful argument into the very error it was built to avoid.

9. A Word About the Word “Son”

Much of the offense in this conversation is carried by one mistranslated idea.

When your friend hears “Son of God,” he hears **walad** — biological offspring, a child produced by a father and a mother. The Qur’an denies this flatly and asks how God could have a *walad* when He has no consort (6:101).

He is right to deny it. Christians deny it too.

We have never taught that God took a wife or fathered a child. The Arabic word Christians use is **ibn** — sonship in the sense of shared nature and eternal relationship, not biological generation. *Begotten, not made.*

Say this early. Your friend has likely spent years rejecting a claim you never made.

10. Why the Savior Must Be Uncreated in Spirit

Everything to this point has been about *who Jesus is*. This section is about *why it had to be Him*, and it is where the two traditions actually part.

First, two things this section is not saying. Get these wrong and your friend will correct you, deservedly.

It is not saying Muslims believe themselves sinless. The Qur’an names an inward principle that incites to evil — *al-nafs al-ammāra bi’l-sū’* (12:53). Your friend knows the interior struggle as well as you do, and usually better than he is given credit for.

And it is not saying Muslims believe they save themselves. Islam is a religion of divine mercy. There is a well-known hadith in which the Prophet says no one enters Paradise by his deeds — and when asked whether even he is excepted, answers that he is not, unless God cover him with His mercy. Accuse your friend of self-righteousness and he will hand you that hadith, and the conversation will end over a claim he never made.

What Islam does hold is that there is no *inherited* corruption — and this, precisely, is the disagreement. Section 2 set out the Christian claim: that sin severed the connection at the spirit (Isaiah 59:2), and that the condition is inherited rather than acquired (Romans 5:12, Psalm 51:5). Islam holds neither. The *fiṭra* is pure, the *rūḥ* remains untouched by our choices, and the damage comes from outside — from the world, from habit, from the appetites of the *nafs*. The remedy follows directly: *tazkiyat al-nafs*, the purification of the self. Sūrah ash-Shams puts it plainly — he has succeeded who purifies it, and failed who corrupts it (91:9–10). This is a serious and disciplined path and should never be described dismissively. Ghazālī gave his life to it.

And on this account forgiveness requires no mediator. God pardons whom He wills, directly, out of His own sovereign mercy. Nothing needs to stand between.

So the disagreement is not grace against works. It is whether pardon is the whole problem.

This model says it is not, and the reason is anthropological.

Sin resides in the spirit — not in the body, not in the soul. Not in appetite or intellect or emotion, all of which are amoral, but in the moral faculty itself. In the one thing God created in him.

This is the claim section 2 argued from James 4:17, and everything in this section stands or falls with it. If sin lives in the soul, discipline can reach it and Islam is right about the remedy. If it lives in the spirit, nothing a person does reaches it at all.

If that is true, then two things follow.

Discipline is aimed at the wrong faculty. The *nafs* can be trained, and training it is good — this model says the soul is genuinely reshaped over a lifetime. But no amount of training reaches a faculty that is not the soul. You cannot repair by effort a thing that was never yours to make.

And pardon, however freely and mercifully given, forgives the debt without repairing the instrument. A man forgiven a thousand times carries the same broken moral center into the next morning.

What is needed is not only forgiveness but *replacement*. The Hebrew Scriptures already knew this, and they use creation language for it:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” — Psalm 51:10

Create. Renew. Not improve, not discipline, not restrain. David, having done the thing he did, does not ask for a better regimen — and the second line names what he wants remade: the spirit.

A note on the word *heart*, since it can confuse the model. In modern English it signals emotion, which in this framework belongs to the soul. The Hebrew *lev* does not mean that. It is the seat of will, judgement, and moral decision — the faculty this model calls the spirit. Where Scripture asks God for a new heart, it is asking for exactly what is argued here. When speaking with someone who reads Arabic, the same caution applies to *qalb*.

“...and I will put a new spirit within you.” — Ezekiel 36:26

God gives it. The man does not generate it.

“Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” — John 3:3

Born. A second time. Not reformed — begun again.

And so the Savior must be uncreated. A created spirit, however holy, can model obedience but cannot manufacture a new one in another man. Only the One who breathed the spirit in can breathe it again. That is the whole argument for the deity of Christ, and it rests on anthropology from beginning to end.

And One Thing More

There is a further difference, and in practice it opens more doors than the argument above.

Islam affirms that God loves. *Al-Wadūd*, the Loving, is among the divine names. But observe its shape: God loves those who do good, who repent, who are just and patient — and does not love the treacherous, the corrupt, the arrogant. To be loved by God, one must first become the kind of person God loves.

Love is something God *has*, and grants to those who qualify.

Scripture says something that has no parallel:

“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” — Romans 5:8

“God is love.” — 1 John 4:8

Not *has*. **Is**. Love belongs to what God is, before there was anything at all for Him to love — and it is aimed at people who had not qualified and could not.

A Muslim friend once said to a worker: *we hear of your love of God, and God's love for you. To us, God is not love, but merely God — and that is enough.*

That is an honest sentence and a reverent one, and it should be honored rather than pounced on. But notice what he is doing. He is naming an absence, and he raised it himself.

The argument earlier in this section explains why a divine Savior is *necessary*. This explains why one is *wanted*. In practice, most people cross over on the second.

This is why the disagreement about Jesus cannot be settled by talking about Jesus. It is settled — or not — by answering one prior question: **is the spirit God gave you intact, or is it the thing that broke?**

11. And Why He Must Also Be Created as Man

The necessity runs in both directions, and this is the hinge of the whole argument.

He cannot be created — because only the uncreated can make a spirit new. And precisely *because* He cannot be created, He must also be created: the uncreated does not die, and without a death there is no redemption. So the eternal Spirit took to Himself a body and a soul that could.

Anselm framed the same structure nine centuries ago in different terms: man ought to make satisfaction and cannot; God can and is under no obligation; therefore only a God-man will do. This model says it anthropologically instead. **Uncreated in spirit, so He can remake ours. Created as man, so He can die.** Neither alone suffices, and each is required by the other.

That is not a contradiction. It is the reason the Incarnation had to happen at all.

Your friend has been taught that Jesus was not killed and not crucified, but that it was made to appear so (4:157). Part of the reasoning behind that is theological rather than historical: God cannot die, and God would not abandon His messenger to such an end.

This model answers directly.

What died was created. Body and soul — both mortal, as section 2 showed from 1 Corinthians 15:44 and Ecclesiastes 12:7. Christ truly died in His humanity; the eternal Son did not cease to exist.

“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” — Luke 23:46

His death followed the ordinary human pattern exactly, which is the point. The body and soul separated from each other — that is what death is — but neither separated from the Word. The person was never divided. Which is why what followed was a resurrection and not a reassembly.

Two Wills, One Person

Recall the two kinds of willing every human carries — the amoral human will of the soul, and the moral will of the spirit, meeting in the heart. **Christ has that same structure, and it is part of what makes Him fully human.** He has a complete human will belonging to His human soul, inherited from Mary — the will that reasons and feels and genuinely recoils; and in the place of the moral will, the spirit, is the eternal Son, whose will is the divine will. Two wills, then, exactly as in any of us — except that in us the second is our own created moral will, and in Him it is God’s.

In Gethsemane you can watch the two meet in His heart:

“Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done.” — Luke 22:42

The human will feels the full pull of the cup — real dread, real recoil (“remove this cup”) — and freely bends to the divine (“not My will, but Yours”). He “has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15); the struggle was genuine, and the human will, though it could feel the pull, freely chose with the divine and never failed.

This is exactly what the Church confessed at the Third Council of Constantinople (680–681) against those who would allow Christ only one will: **two wills, human and divine, undivided and unfused.** The model does not strain against that confession — it supplies its anatomy. What Maximus the Confessor called Christ’s *natural human will* — the will that recoils from suffering and death, “let this cup pass” — is precisely what this model calls the human, or natural, will of the soul: the same reality under two names, wholly within the creed. And should it seem His humanity is missing something — a human *moral* will of its own — the answer is the same one the model gives for the spirit: the moral will is not a human faculty subtracted from Him, but the place the eternal Son fills. His manhood lacks nothing; the moral center is simply occupied by God. That is what it is to be a man in whom the spirit is God — willing as a man, in perfect accord with the God who is His own uncreated center.

Corruptible, Yet Never Corrupted

There is one more distinction here, and it is the one that makes the cross actually work — the difference between being *corruptible* and being *corrupted*. The body and soul the Son took from Mary were corruptible: mortal, able to hunger, to grieve, to bleed, and to die. He never corrupted them — He was without sin, spotless to the end. But the capacity to die had to be real, for a nature that could not die could not save. Scripture is exact about why He shared our flesh and blood: “that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death” (Hebrews 2:14). He came “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3) — real flesh, able to bear all that ours bears, yet never itself sinful.

On the cross that corruptible vessel became the place where the punishment of sin was laid — all of it. He bore it in His body and in His soul: the One who “bore our sins in His body on the tree” also “poured out His soul to death” (1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:12). But mark *how* He bore it — as a penalty carried, not a stain caught. Sin was reckoned to Him, laid *on* Him, not lodged *in* Him; its death was exacted from Him while His own nature stayed unstained. And here the model shows why it could be no other way. Sin’s seat is the spirit — but the spirit joined to this body and soul is no severed human spirit; it is God the Son, whose moral center never wavered and never could. There was no way for God to become sin in His spirit. So the sin of the world could only be what Scripture says it was: a punishment absorbed into the body and soul of the sinless One, killed as the sacrificial Lamb, bearing what He had never done.

And it is precisely His staying unblemished that qualified Him to bear it. The lamb of sacrifice had to be “without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:19), for only an unblemished offering is acceptable; a blemished one is turned away. So the paradox at the heart of the cross is not a contradiction but the very thing that makes it hold: the sinless One is “made sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21), the spotless One carries every stain — and stays spotless. Had the moral center wavered even once, there would have been no offering left to give.

One last thing the model keeps whole. That corruptible flesh truly died — and yet “did not see corruption” (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27). It lay in the tomb without decay, and rose. Both are true, and for one reason: the vessel was corruptible, and so could be killed; but the Person who bore it is the deathless Son, and so death could not hold Him. The corruptible manhood dies bearing the world’s punishment; the incorruptible Person raises it incorruptible — the cross and the empty tomb held within a single frame.

12. The Incarnation Does Not End

He did not borrow humanity for thirty-three years and hand it back. Paul writes in the present tense, after the ascension:

“In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” — Colossians 2:9

“There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” — 1 Timothy 2:5

Still *the man*. He was created as man at conception, died a man, rose a man, and remains so.

13. On What Remains Hidden

This model clarifies the Incarnation. It does not exhaust it, and it was never intended to. A theoretical model demonstrates possibilities; it does not facsimilate ultimate truth.

There is no shame in that, and no weakness. We accept mystery about eternity, about the life to come, about the new heaven and the new earth. The Incarnation belongs in that company.

And your friend already has a formula for this posture. Muslims affirm the attributes of God *bilā kayf* — “without asking how.” The saying commonly ascribed to Imam Mālik runs roughly: the fact is known, the manner is unknown, belief in it is required, and questioning it is overreach.

You may say, honestly and without evasion: *we hold the Incarnation the way you hold the attributes — the fact revealed, the manner not.*

That is not a dodge. It is a shared epistemology, and it may be the most respectful sentence in the conversation.

14. What Makes a Christian a Christian

Everything to this point has been about a structure. This last section is about what the structure is *for*, and it is where a missionary should be able to end.

God did not make us as an experiment or a workforce. He made us to know Him and to be known by Him. That is what the created spirit is for — it is the faculty of fellowship. He loves us, and He desires a relationship with each of us; the whole account of Scripture from the garden onward is of a God who comes looking.

That faculty is the part that broke. The damage is what separates us from the closeness we were made for (Isaiah 59:2), and it is inherited rather than earned (Romans 5:12). Every messianic promise in the Hebrew Scriptures is the announcement of God’s plan to mend it.

The plan was this: His Son would live as a man and die as a man, and become the sacrifice that takes the sin away.

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” — John 1:29

“...a lamb unblemished and spotless.” — 1 Peter 1:19

With a Muslim friend, this has a natural bridge. He keeps a feast each year remembering that God provided a ram in the place of a son. Do not turn that into an argument about which son — the point is that he already holds the shape of the idea: God accepts a substitute He Himself provides. What we are saying is that God did it once more, and finally, and that this time the lamb was His own.

The steps

First, we recognise that we are sinners. Not that we have made mistakes — that the fault is *in* us, in the faculty we cannot reach by effort.

Second, we accept that Jesus died as a human sacrifice to atone for our sins: perfect, unblemished, the lamb the Scriptures had been describing for centuries.

Third, we confess our sin and ask God to forgive us. This is the act the first two steps have been leading to. Knowing our need, and knowing what the Savior has done, we turn: we own before God the fault we cannot mend, we ask His forgiveness, and we ask Him to apply that sacrifice to us. It is not a work that earns the repair — it is the open hand that receives it. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Fourth, we trust that accepting that sacrifice repairs the original damage. The break is dealt with, and the repair restores what was lost — the capacity for fellowship with God.

Fifth, our spirit is then in fellowship with His. We feel it. We know it. We celebrate it. And that fellowship changes us: slowly, over a lifetime, working outward from the spirit into the soul and the body.

And that last step is the answer

A Christian is not someone who assents to a list of propositions. **A Christian is someone whose spirit has been made new and is in fellowship with God.**

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” — Romans 8:16

Spirit with spirit. The model has been arguing toward this sentence the whole way: if the spirit is the faculty of moral volition and of fellowship, then redemption must happen *there*, and assurance is not an inference from behaviour but a witness at the level where the repair was made.

Note what the model does *not* promise. The body is unchanged and still mortal. The soul — reason, temperament, appetite — is unchanged at conversion, which is why a new believer so often finds his mind and habits at war with a faith he knows is real. Nothing has gone wrong when that happens. It is what this model predicts.

And that is where the Christian life begins

Conversion restores the fellowship. Living in it takes the rest of a lifetime.

Christians differ among themselves about how that growth works — how quickly, in what stages, how complete it becomes before the resurrection. Those are real questions, and they are questions *among Christians*. This paper does not need to settle them, and a conversation with a Muslim friend is not the place to. *Understanding the Nature of Humanity* — The Paper behind this series — takes them up at length for anyone who wants them.

What matters here is simpler, and every Christian tradition holds it.

The fellowship changes us. Not instantly and not evenly. The spirit is made new at once, but a person’s mind, temper, habits and appetites are his own, and they come along slowly. That is what

the church is for, and the old disciplines — scripture, prayer, gathered fellowship, fasting, service — not to earn a repair already made, but because they are how the rest of a person catches up.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”
— Romans 12:2

The *mind*: the soul’s own faculty, and the part that takes time.

And here is the piece worth stating precisely, because it explains something a Muslim friend has already noticed about you.

Most of what any of us does in a day is amoral. What we wear, what we say, how we react, whom we sit with, what we find funny. None of these are moral acts in themselves. But every one of them lands on somebody, and in its effects it carries moral weight.

A person in restored fellowship becomes increasingly attentive to exactly that: **the moral ramifications of his amoral choices.** He weighs how a thing will land before he does it. He becomes considerate, patient, respectful — not because a rule requires it, but because his moral faculty now reaches into decisions no rule covers.

For this paper’s purpose that is not an abstraction. It is why a worker takes his shoes off at the door, learns the language, refuses to argue to win, and honours what his friend already believes. Those are not tactics. It is what restored fellowship looks like from the outside, and a Muslim friend reads it long before he reads anything on paper.

None of it reaches perfection here. A Christian in fellowship with God still has a temper, blind spots and bad days. What he has is not flawlessness — it is a life increasingly shaped by the One he is now able to know.

Not perfect, then. But *useful* — useful for showing what the kingdom of heaven looks like where it touches the earth, and for carrying the love of God into it.

“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” — Matthew 5:16

Closing

The distance between you and your friend is not as wide as either of you was taught. You agree about the body. You agree about the self. You agree that the spirit is God’s gift and not God’s substance.

You differ on two things: whether that spirit is broken, and whether it was, once, uncreated.

Everything else follows from those. And one thing more, which is not an argument at all — that we claim God does not merely have love, but *is* love, and proved it toward people who had not qualified and could not.

Glossary of Key Terms

Body. The physical person — flesh and blood; amoral in itself, and mortal.

Soul. The inner machinery of the person — reason, memory, emotion, appetite, and the ordinary (natural) will. Amoral, and shared in some measure with the animals.

Spirit. The moral, God-ward center, unique to human beings — the seat of moral choice and of fellowship with God; it bears the created image of God. Created in every person and inherited from Adam; in Jesus alone, uncreated — God the Son.

Nature (N). Where body and soul overlap: the creaturely life, appetite and temperament, the region of the *natural will*. Amoral.

Heart (H). Where soul and spirit overlap: the inward place where the two wills meet and a decision is made. Not itself the seat of morality — the place where the struggle is fought.

Conduct (C). Where body and spirit overlap: the moral will made visible — what a person actually does, where holiness or its opposite is seen.

Person (P). The whole human being — body, soul, and spirit joined in one undivided life; the center where all three meet.

Human will / natural will. The soul's will — rational and emotional, but amoral. The two names are interchangeable, and both accord with the historic creeds' "natural human will."

Moral will. The spirit's will — the capacity to weigh a choice against the good and against God. In Christ, the will in the spirit-place is the divine will of the Son.

Two wills. That every person wills in two ways — the soul's natural will and the spirit's moral will — meeting in the heart. Christ shares this human structure: a complete human will in His soul, and in the spirit-place the divine will of the Son (the two wills, human and divine, confessed at the Third Council of Constantinople).

Corruptible / corruption. *Corruptible* means able to suffer and die; *corruption* means the actuality of sin or decay. Christ's body and soul were corruptible (able to die) yet never corrupted (He never sinned).

Imputation. Sin's penalty reckoned to Christ and borne by Him — *laid on Him, not poured into Him* — while His own nature stayed unstained.

The Perfect Vessel. That His corruptible body and soul could bear the whole punishment of sin while His uncreated moral center never wavered; the unblemished offering that alone qualifies as the sacrifice, and the flesh that truly died yet "saw no corruption" and rose.

Image of God (*imago Dei*). The likeness of God borne by the human spirit — a created reflection of Him, not a piece of His own being.

Regeneration (new birth). The spirit made alive again and rejoined to God — the immediate work of salvation, from which renewal spreads outward across a lifetime.

Confession and repentance. The human response to the gospel: to confess our sin, ask God's forgiveness, and turn to Christ in faith — not a work that earns the repair, but the open hand that receives it.

Shirk. In Islam, the sin of associating partners with God. The model's whole aim is to show that confessing Christ's deity names *no second god* and so is not shirk.

Tawhīd. The oneness of God — the ground both traditions begin from.

Rūḥ. In Islam, the spirit breathed into a person by God — closely parallel to the *Spirit* of this model.

Fiṭra. In Islam, the original, unspoiled nature a person is born with. The model's disagreement is here: whether the spirit is *inherited already broken*.

Nafs. In Islam, the self or soul that must be disciplined — close to the model's *Soul*.

Theotokos. "God-bearer" — the historic title of Mary, affirming that the one born of her is God the Son.

The Paper. *Understanding the Nature of Humanity: An Anthropological Framework for Christian Doctrine* — the full theological foundation behind this outreach paper and the whole series.

Verify all Arabic and Qur'anic wording with a fluent speaker before this paper is circulated. Transliterations follow common usage and are offered as a starting point for conversation, not as a substitute for a native reader's ear.