

e. The problem of Hebrews 13:8

Hebrews 13:8 states "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever."

On the one hand we must affirm that the Son of God, as God, has always been what He is and what He ever will be. As God there is no becoming in His essence, or His nature, or His attributes; there is only being. Another way of stating this is to say that there is no potential in God's nature that is not fully actualized. There are no characteristics that are undeveloped. God's attributes are perfect and complete. All of His perfections are essential; none of them are accidental. As such, God is not in process of becoming.

On the other hand, God is living, dynamic, active. He thinks thoughts, feels emotions, purposes to do certain things, and puts forth efficiency to produce effects. Immutability does not deny the distinction between the infinite potential of God's power and the actual expressions of that power. That is, the assertion that there are some things in God's Plan that He has not yet done but will do (e. g., create new heavens and a new earth) does not conflict with the doctrine of immutability, since in this assertion a distinction is made between the infinite, unchanging perfection of God's attributes, and the ongoing, unfolding, changing expression of those attributes in actions.

These considerations enable us to see that Hebrew 13: 8 does not deny the change from the Son of God's preincarnate state of glory to His incarnate state of humiliation, or from His incarnate state of humiliation to His incarnate state of exaltation. Nor does this Scripture deny the real change from the single-nature character of the Son of God preceding the incarnation event to the dual-nature character of the Son of God following the incarnation event. Since these changes must be admitted, this Scripture cannot deny them!

One interpretation proposes that the emphasis here is that Christ was the God-man from the recent historical past (i.e., when He was first preached to the readers by Paul and then by Peter), and continues to be the God-man today, and for ever.

The other major interpretation proposes that the emphasis here is that Christ has been divine (and thus immutable with respect to His divine nature) from eternity past, continues to be divine, and will be divine to all eternity.

Neither interpretation conflicts with the doctrine of the immutability of God.