

## CHRIST'S HUMANITY

There are a number of commonly held misconceptions regarding the nature of the Savior's humanity. Some teach that Christ's human nature was less important than and overridden by His divine nature. It is believed in some circles that the two natures of Christ blended into one to form a kind of superman. Others think that since Christ has two natures, He must have had two personalities.

Then again, many mistakenly imagine that Christ was fifty percent God and fifty percent human. Still others think that the deity of Christ simply means that God lived inside the body of Jesus. Many Christians too assert some alteration in the humanity of Jesus Christ. The variations in these interpretations are legion – Jesus is not really human. Jesus is two persons in one body, Jesus is both man and God but only man died on the cross, while God did not etc.

19<sup>th</sup> Century expositor C.H. Mackintosh rightly said: The truth respecting Christ's humanity must be received with Scripture accuracy, held with spiritual energy, guarded with holy jealousy, and confessed with heavenly power. If we are wrong as to this, we cannot be right as to anything. It is a guard, vital fundamental truth; and if it is not received, held, guarded, and confessed as God has revealed it in His holy Word, the entire doctrine must be unsound.<sup>1</sup>

When Godhood joined with manhood, the divine nature (deity) and human nature (humanity) were united. Thus, at the point of His conception in the womb of Mary, the eternal Son of God took humanity and assumed it, so that it became His own as much as His divine nature had always been His own. It is important to understand that the

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<sup>1</sup>Michael J. Penfold, "*The Humanity of Christ*", personal Website, <http://www.webtruth.org/articles/Christology-33/the-humanity-of-christ-70.html> (accessed 20 August 2007).

humanity He took was not a person, but a nature, for the Lord Jesus is one person but possesses two natures. A person without a human nature would not be human.

The theologians call the union of deity and humanity in one person a *hypostatic union*.

At the incarnation, a sinless human nature – not merely a human body – yet those two natures remained distinct, whole and unchanged joining without conversion, mixture or confusion, so that the one whole person, Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man at one and at the same time. It needs to be emphasized that in the incarnation the two natures did not convert to a third nor did one nature convert to the other nor was there any dilution or suppression of either nature. For example:

- Christ's two natures can be distinguished but not separated.
- Christ became something He never was while never ceasing to be what he always was.
- Christ has only one personality.
- Christ's humanity never has an independent existence.
- Christ is not able to sin, any more than God can sin.
- Christ's humanity is not independent of His deity.
- Christ never does anything as man or as God – He acts as Christ, who is God manifest in flesh.

To say, therefore that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is to say that He came and died in the state and under the conditions of created physical and physical life; in other words, he who died was a man. But the New Testament also affirms that he who died

eternally was and continues to be God. The formula which enshrines the incarnation therefore is that in some sense God.<sup>2</sup> This is what John asserts in the prologue of his Gospel: “the Word (God’s agent in creation, who ‘in the beginning ‘, before the creation, not only ‘was with God’, but he ‘was God’, Jn. 1:1-3) ‘became flesh’ (Jn 1:14).

### **Historical Controversies – Christ’s Human Nature**

A number of false ideas about the nature of Christ’s humanity and deity have arisen over the centuries, from the earliest days up to the present. Here are the details of the main ones:

#### The Docetists

They – late first century believed that though Jesus appeared human, He was really only divine. They taught that the divine Christ descended on the man Jesus at His baptism and left before the cross. Thus they denied that Christ ever had a real body.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Ebionites

This group was a remnant of extreme Judaizing Christianity. They taught that Christ was not pre-existent and only had the Spirit after His baptism. All such denials of the deity of Christ involve a denial of the Trinity as well.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Apollinarianism

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<sup>2</sup>I. Howard Marshall and others, *New Bible Dictionary 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.*, (Downers, Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 501.

<sup>3</sup> Henry C. Thiessen *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 206.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 206

One error in the fourth century, named after Apollinarius of Laodicea (b. circa 310AD), argued that since the human mind leads men into sin, Christ, who could not sin, must not have been a true human, rather the *Lagos* took the place of His mind. Apollinarius claimed that Christ was human and divine, but in reality denied the true humanity of Christ. For if Christ did not have a human mind He was not truly human.<sup>5</sup>

### The Monophysitism

A heresy by the name of Monophysitism – from ‘mono’ single and ‘physis’ nature – rejected the two nature of Christ. It stated that Jesus’ two natures were combined into one new one. Thus neither God nor man was represented in Christ but a new third thing.<sup>6</sup>

### The Gnostics

This system had a basic dualism running through it: the higher and the lower, the spirit and the flesh, the good and evil. Because flesh is considered evil, God could not become flesh, at least not in the orthodox interpretation of the incarnation. The Gnosticism taught that the divine Christ came upon the human Jesus at his baptism and departed shortly before Jesus’ death.<sup>7</sup> Today counterpart to this ancient group would be the New Age Movement.

### The Arians

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 206

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 206

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 206

The Arian controversy of the fourth century is widely regarded as one of the most significant in the history of the Christian church. Arius (c.250-c.336) argued that the scriptural title for Christ, which appeared to point to his being of equal status with God were merely courtesy titles. Christ was to be regarded as a creature, although nevertheless as pre-eminent amongst other creatures. Thus they view Christ as a demi-god, neither fully human nor fully God.<sup>8</sup> The representatives of this view today are the Jehovah Witness.

#### The Monarchianism

They overemphasized the unity of the Godhead making Christ and the spirit mere functions of the Father. This is similar to the modern error held by ‘Jesus only.’<sup>9</sup>

#### Esoteric Christian Tradition

For the Rosicrucians there is a distinction to be made between Jesus and Christ. Jesus is considered a high Initiate of the human life wave that evolves under the cycles of rebirth and of a singularly pure type of mind, vastly to superior to the great majority of the present humanity. He was educated during his youth among the Essenes and thus prepared himself for the greatest honor ever bestowed upon a human being: to deliver his pure, passionless, highly evolved physical body and vital body (already attuned to the high vibrations of the ‘life spirit’), in the moment of the baptism, to the Christ being for

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<sup>8</sup> Alister E. McGrath. *Christian Theology*. An Introduction, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 2000), 18.

<sup>9</sup> Michael J. Penfold, “*The Humanity of Christ*”, personal Website, <http://www.webtruth.org/articles/Christology-33/the-humanity-of-christ-70.html> (accessed 20 August 2007).

his ministry in the physical world. Christ is described as the highest spiritual being of the life wave called Archangels and has completed His union (the Son) with the second aspect of God.<sup>10</sup>

### Christian Science

In the theology of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, the religion's founder wrote in her book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scripture* that the invisible Christ was imperceptible to the so-called personal senses, whereas Jesus appeared as a bodily existence. This dual personality of the unseen and the seen, the spiritual and material, the eternal Christ and the corporeal Jesus manifest in flesh, continued until the Master's ascension, when the human concept, or Jesus disappeared while the spiritual self, or Christ continues to exist in the eternal order of divine science taking away the sins of the world as Christ has always done even before the human Jesus was incarnate to mortal eyes. Thus in Christian Science, the Christ is God's divine message to human consciousness that brings healing to humanity. Jesus fully embodied the divine nature of the Christ representing this nature to us.<sup>11</sup>

### Islamic View

Muslims recognize Jesus Christ (Isa) as the messiah and prophet of God. In Islam he is considered a Muslim and his second coming is expected to occur among Muslims. Muslims believe in his miraculous conception and birth, but not as son of God. Jesus would also lead Muslims in the final victory over those that disbelieved him or

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<sup>10</sup> Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception* (Part III, Chapter XV: Christ and His Mission (<http://www.rosicrucian.com/rec/rcceng15.htm>), November 1909, ISBN 0-911274-34-0.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with the Keys to the Scripture*.  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ> (August 2007).

misidentified him as the son of God, what is considered as the highest sin in Islam and against the antichrist (book of Hadith by Imam Bukhari). Muslims also believe that Jesus was neither crucified nor dead but was raised to heaven by God while still living.<sup>12</sup>

### Communication of Attributes

The communion of attributes (*communicatio idiomatum*) of Christ's divine and human nature is understood according to Chalcedonian theology to mean that they exist together with neither overriding the other. That is both are preserved and coexist in one person. Christ had all the properties of God and humanity. God did not stop being God and become man. Christ was not half-God and half-human. The two natures did not mix into a new third kind of nature. Although independently, they acted in complete accord; when one nature acted, so did the other. The natures did not commingle, merge, in each infused each other, or replace each other. One was not converted into the other. They remained separate (yet acted with one accord).<sup>13</sup>

### Christ's Humanity Review

To know Christ as God, to know Him as man, to know Him as God-man, and this by a divine revelation of His person is indeed to have eternal life in our hearts. Nor can he be known in any other way than by divine and special revelation. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me" (Gal. 1:15-16). An imaginary conception of His person may be obtained by

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<sup>12</sup> Sheik Ahmed Deedat, *Christ in Islam, Why Islam?* [1]  
([http://whyislam.org/877/Prophet8Jesus/Christ\\_In\\_Islam.asp](http://whyislam.org/877/Prophet8Jesus/Christ_In_Islam.asp))

<sup>13</sup> Alister E. Mcgrath. *Christian Theology*. An Introduction, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 2000), 339-341.

diligently studying the Scripture but a vital knowledge of Him must be communicated from on high (Mt 16:17). A theoretical and theological knowledge of Christ is what the natural man may acquire but a saving, soul-transforming view of him is only given by the Spirit to the regenerate (2 Co 3:18, 1Jn 5:20).

History supplies no analogy nor can His humanity be illustrated by anything in nature. It is incomparable, not only to our fallen human nature, but also to un-fallen of Adam. The Lord Jesus was born into circumstances totally different from those in which Adam first found himself but the sins and grieves of His people were on him from the first. His humanity was produced neither by natural generation nor by special creation as was of Adam. The humanity of Christ was under the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, supernaturally conceived (Isa 7:14) of the virgin. It was “prepared” of God (Heb 10:5); yet “made of a woman” (Gal 4:4).

Adam is seen in Scripture as the physical head of the human race. His sin in the garden continued us and made us liable to death (Rom 5:12). Just as all were made sinners through Adam, so all may be judicially made righteous through Christ: “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by obedience of one shall many be righteous” (Ro 5:19).<sup>14</sup>

Due to the fall of Adam, another Adam was needed and divine grace supplied the need; the Son of God became man and in combined Godhead and manhood wrought redemption by His vicarious sacrifices. He is called the last Adam. He fulfilled in

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<sup>14</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the NKJV, unless noted.



himself all that made him in resurrection the head of the new race (of believer). Without becoming man none of these would have been possible.

Christ's Humanity links with David and thus the Throne of Israel.

Christ's links with David are vital and vitally mentioned in the Bible.

- He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh (Ro 1:3).
- He was born in the city of David (Lk 2:11)
- He was promised the sure mercies of David –Acts 13:34 (2Sa 7:12-14), the seed, the throne, the house.
- He has the key of David (Rev 22:16)
- He is the root and offspring of David's Lord (Mt 22:43-45)
- He will sit on the throne of David (Lk 1:32)

Clearly none of this makes sense unless the Lord Jesus is related to David. The Gospels according to Matthew chapter one and Luke chapter two give us two genealogies of Christ. Each list is identical from Abraham to David but from David to Christ the line diverges. Luke traces the line from David through his son Nathan to Joseph the husband of Mary. Matthew traces the line from David through his son Solomon to Mary the mother of the Lord. Thus Christ's parents, Joseph and Mary were both directly to David. However, in Joseph's line a king called Jeconiah (Mt 1:11) was cut off by God. All His children were disqualified from sitting on David's throne (Jer 22:30). How can Christ inherit David's throne? Due to the virgin birth Joseph was not the actual father of Jesus so Christ is physically related to David through Mary (Luke 3) and legally related to David through Joseph (Mt 1).

Christ's Humanity enables Him to fulfill Scripture

How many Old Testament prophecies would have gone unfulfilled if Christ had never become man! For example, the Lord's prophecy of the seed of the woman who would bruise Satan's head (Ge 3:16), Isaiah's prophecy of a virgin birth (Isa 7:14) and David's prophecy of a messiah nailed by hands and feet (Ps 22:16).

Christ's Humanity enables Him to die

Angels do not and cannot die but in order to become the sacrifice for our sins the Lord Jesus became a little lower in rank than the angels. He became man and thus was able to die. His humanity is absolutely essential to all that He did on the cross (Heb 2:9). Christ's humanity fits Him to be our High Priest (Heb 2:17, 4:15). As High Priest in heaven, His succouring ministry is based on his experiences in this world that are uniquely connected with His humanity. During thirty three years on earth he became intimately familiar with suffering, misunderstanding, weariness and pains. In fact, he was subjected to all the trials of the human condition, apart from the question of sin.

### **Proofs for the Doctrine**

At the time of Christ's conception in the womb of Mary, not only did a new body come into being but a human soul and spirit too. It is important to distinguish between the personal spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit. When on the cross Jesus said, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit", He was then referring to His own personal spirit not the Holy Spirit. Thus at the moment of death, though His human body hung lifeless on the cross, Christ human soul and spirit were still in essential invisible union with His deity in heaven.

The Bible is careful to record the reality of Christ's humanity (Mt 4:2, Mk 4:38 and Jn 19:28). What a wonder that the God of eternity, the one who sits upon the circle of the earth also sat on Jacob's well wearied with His disciples. It is essential to understand that Christ's weariness was real and figurative. In the Old Testament Jehovah speaks of being weary with Israel in a figurative sense (Isa 1:14) but the human weariness of Christ was a physical reality. This course means that weariness, tiredness, hunger and thirst are not of a fall.

It is surely the case that the sufferings of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane and indeed on the cross were intensified due to the fact that His humanity had never been coarsened by sin. His agony was indescribably real and went to depths that none from Adam's sinful race could ever know or fathom. The suffering in the garden alone, in anticipation of being made sin on the cross left Jesus physically weak. He was strengthened from heaven for further and much more intense agonies of the cross (Lk 22:43-44).

#### The Humanity of Christ was Real

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same... Wherefore in all the things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren”(Heb 2:14, 17). He assumed a complete human nature, spirit, soul and body as said from the previous paragraph. Christ did not bring his human nature from heaven as some have erroneously concluded from 1 Corinthians 15:47) but it was composed of the very substance of his mother. In clothing himself with flesh and blood, Christ also clothed himself with human feeling so he did not differ from his brethren.

As we always contend that Christ is God, let us never lose the conviction that he is most certainly a man. He is not God humanized or a human deified but as to his Godhead, pure Godhead equal and coeternal with the Father as to his manhood made in all respect likes the rest of mankind without sin. His humanity is real, for he was born. He lay in the virgin's womb and in due time he was born. He was not created or transformed but his humanity was begotten and born.

Christ had a Human Body of Flesh and Blood (Mt 26:12, Jn 19:34)

The Bible clearly and repeatedly refers to the physical body of Christ. It was normal boy of flesh and blood, in every respect the same as every other human body as part from sin. Based on 1 Pe 1:18-19 some erroneously teach Christ's blood was not human. They claim that Jesus actually took all of His blood back to heaven with Him! Acts 20:28 says the blood is God's but only in the sense that Christ is God not that His blood was not human. Blood cells that have no nucleus are born to die within a lifespan of about 120 days.<sup>15</sup> The Lord's true humanity demands that His blood had to be replaced as did His skin (about every 30 days), just as in all other humans.<sup>16</sup> If the Lord's blood never died, he would have had the same red and white cells from Bethlehem to Calvary which implies a totally inactive bone marrow.

However, since He was truly human, his bone marrow would daily replace His dead cells. All other explanations lead to a non-human conclusion. The Savior's deciduous teeth, His hair, his nails and spittle all passed from Him in the normal way without in any way compromising his holy sinless person. True, his body was

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<sup>15</sup> *Childcraft – The How and Why Library, vol. 14* (Chicago: Field enterprises Educational Corporation, 1975), 58.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 166.

incorruptible during His life. Heb 9:12 says Christ entered into heaven by His blood (*dia*), not with His blood; that is by virtue of His blood, not literally carrying it.

The Westminster Confession of Faith's description of the glorious truth of the nature of Christ's humanity could hardly be surpassed:

The son of God, the second person of the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of the time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary of her substance, so that two whole, perfect and distinct natures, the Godhead and manhood, were inseparably joined in one person, without conversion, composition or confusion, which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.<sup>17</sup>

The Holy Spirit is very careful in Scripture to record events in such a way that the reader is never allowed to wander far away from the combined and inseparable truths of the humanity and deity of Christ.

- Though asleep on a pillow, the Lord is able to rebuke the wind and still the storm (Mk 4:38-39).
- Though wearied with his journey, the lord is still the one who is able to tell the woman at the well her whole life's history (Jn 4:3-29).
- Though shedding real tears at the grave of Lazarus, the Lord is able to call Lazarus forth from the grave (Jn 11:35-43).
- Though sweating as it were great drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord proceeds to heal Malchus' ear and upon saying the words "I am" the crowd goes backward and falls to the ground (Lk 22:44-51, Jn 18:5).

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<sup>17</sup> Michael J. Penfold, "*The Humanity of Christ*", personal Website, <http://www.webtruth.org/articles/Christology-33/the-humanity-of-christ-70.html> (accessed 20 August 2007).

- Though born of a woman the Lord is still God's Son (Gal 4:4).

### Christ's Human Nature Fulfilled Old Testament Prophecy

The redemption of mankind from his sins has been the intention of the God of love from the beginning. "And I will put enmity between thee [Satan] and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise His heel" (Ge 3:15). Much of God's redemptive program seems mysterious to us because His ways are so much higher than our ways. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:9).

The "Seed" (Ge 3:15) of the woman makes embryonic reference to the Virgin en birth and humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even before we had confessed that we were sinners, the Father had been preparing His son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn 2:2). Satan bruised the heel of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, but only temporarily. "Which none of the prices of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Co 2:8). However, Satan's head was bruised by the Lord Jesus Christ ultimately, for eternity. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rev 20:10).

The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten son (1 Jn 4:9) of the Father, was always and eternally begotten in his person. "I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father (Ps 2:7 NIV). But the Son's manifestation in human flesh occurred only about 2,000 years ago. "When fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman under the law" (Gal 4:4). The

humanity of Christ is part of the “mystery of godliness” (1 Ti 3:16). Only any man with a willing heart to do the will of God could understand such a puzzle.

When the Lord Jesus was confronted with the contentious and deceptive questions of the Scribes and Pharisees, he proposed His own question to them, which if they answered, he would answer their questions. Jesus addressed the Messianic significance in the book of Psalms that lends itself to both the concepts of the divinity and humanity of the Messiah.

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make your enemies thy footstool” (Ps 110:1). Jesus addressed the Scribes who claimed to believe the Scripture with the seeming contradiction that the Messiah, who would be ‘David’s son’ (humanity of Christ), would also be David’s Lord or superior (divinity of Christ). “Then Jesus said to them, “How it that they say the Christ is is the Son of David? David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. David calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?” (Lk 20:41-44 NIV).

### **Conclusion**

The doctrine of the humanity of Christ is so important that the true confession of it is a test of belonging to God. “This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God (1 Jn 4:2 NIV).

Because of the celebration of Christmas, we have benefited from a thorough familiarization with the idea of the birth of Jesus in a Bethlehem manger; but the true benefit of the Christmas story is the manifestation of the son of God in human flesh to “redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit 2:14 NIV).

We need to be reminded that the baby in a Bethlehem manger was named Jesus, by his Father, “because he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21 NIV). His Christmas advent as a real human baby was necessary:

1. to fulfil prophecy, i.e., “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa 7:14),
2. to provide an atoning sacrifice for the sins of mankind, i.e., “But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1Pe 1:19),
3. to provide a mediator between God and man, i.e., “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Ti 2:5),
4. to provide us an example of how we can and ought to live, i.e., “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, that you should, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps” (1 Pe 2:21 NIV), and
5. to give us the spirit of the New Covenant to secure our obedience, i.e., “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (Jn 16:7).