

The Christ

Since Jesus Christ came to the earth there have been many disputes about His nature. Many theologians have given innumerable amounts of time to the study of Jesus' nature and characteristics. Some of the biggest debates in the Christian church have been about the nature of Christ. Council upon council discussed and determined what Jesus Christ was like to the best of their abilities. From looking at the various viewpoints, it may be hard to find the absolute right answer to Jesus' nature and attributes. The hardest thing about the situation is that no one really knows for sure the totality of the nature and attributes of Jesus Christ. Because of this, it is important to seek out what seems to fit what you know of the Bible and its references to Jesus and decide what you believe. In finding this, you will become aware of your personal philosophy or theology. When a person knows his personal theology, it makes him more solid. In this paper, I will be viewing various aspects of several theologians, new and old, and showing my support of the ones I believe to be true.

The nature of Christ is viewed in many ways. The nature includes Jesus' human and divine qualities.

Tertullian believed that there were two substances in Christ, divinity and humanity, both of which retained their characteristics in Christ. Both of these elements must be present in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ had to be divine and human at the same time. Many people have tried to deny one or the other. I believe that Athanasius has the best argument for the divinity of the Son. If, like Arius believed, Christ was not divine and of the same divine substance as the Father, and we still worship the Son, then we would be practicing polytheism. Athanasius attempts to prove Jesus' divinity in several other rebuttals to Arius' doctrine. One shows that Jesus is not an intermediate figure between God and creation. Another relates that if we can see the Father through Jesus, then Jesus must not be on a level that is less than the Father, but on an equal level. If Jesus was truly the savior of mankind, then it must be that He was God because the Savior must be God. The Savior must be God because he must be the Creator as well so that He may re-create that lives of mankind. Since the Creator is God, and the Savior is the Creator, then the Savior is God. One of the jobs of the Savior is divinization. Divinization can be described as being made able to exist like God. Only God can accomplish divinization. Therefore, the Savior must be God. Because of this

argument, I can see a logical reason for Jesus Christ to be called divine. Although, Jesus is God he must also be man--fully man.

There are as many ideas on Jesus' humanity as there are on his divinity. Clement believed that Jesus (the Word) assumed human form. However, Clement also holds that the Word did so to the extent that the human characteristics were lost. On this point Clement was wrong. Jesus had to be human--fully human. If He was not fully human then He could not truly suffer the passion. The Bible could not be truthful in the statement that relates Jesus having "like passions" with mankind if Jesus was not fully man. Jesus also had to have the characteristics of a man. This would include not only a flesh-and-blood body, but also a human name, a human descent, a human, although miraculous, birth, human emotions, human wants, and human suffering and death. (Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 258) Apollanarianism is a belief that Jesus did not have a rational human soul. Instead, the Word filled the void of the soul. This belief is also wrong. Jesus is described in ways that suggest a rational human soul. For example, "He thought, reasoned, felt...", had emotions, "...increased in wisdom." Jesus did not know when the judgment would come. (Hodge, Systematic Theology V. II, p. 381) Some

people believed that Jesus simply "appeared" in human form at the appropriate time. If this is true then all that he did on the cross was a farce. Since we know that God is not a deceptive being, we therefore cannot accept this idea. Without a human nature and attributes, the Son would not be capable of entering man's realm and fulfilling the law. Therefore, we would still be a fallen race with no path of redemption. Through his humanity in the Passion we can be redeemed.

As divinity, Jesus had certain divine attributes. For example, He was coeternal with the Father and Spirit, omniscient, and omnipotent. How could Jesus become fully man with these attributes of divinity? This question can be answered by the doctrine of *kenosis*. This doctrine suggests that Jesus "emptied himself" of some of his divine attributes at the Incarnation. This idea seems to make sense. This would explain why Jesus did not know when the judgment would come--he limited Himself to finite knowledge.

The doctrine of *kenosis* was enacted at the incarnation. The incarnation took place in the virgin Mary. The reality of her virginity expresses the fact that the incarnation was not within the human circle but originated in God. The soul of Jesus was divinely created. It was not created through the union of a man

and woman. Without this virgin birth, Jesus could not be fully God and fully man.

In knowing that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man, mankind can take comfort. God sent his Son, a fully divine being, into creation to make a road to God from the fallen nature of man. One of the strongest affirmations of the nature and qualities of Jesus Christ is the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God, the Almighty Father, maker of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of us humans and because of our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming human, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead;

And in the Holy Spirit.

But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is created, or is subject to alteration or change--these the Catholic Church anathematizes.

Through these remarks and excerpts I have attempted to show my personal Christology. Knowing what you believe truly makes you stronger and able to communicate it to others more effectively.

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