

Firm Foundation

The Doctrine of Christ

Introduction

The supreme importance of this article rests on the fact that the saving grace of God is not absolute, founded on God's power, but has been gained by Christ. True, we generally call the doctrine of justification the central article of the Christian doctrine. But this article is directly based on the doctrine of Christ's God-Man Person and God-Man work. We are justified by grace, without the deeds of the Law, but that only "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24), only because Christ paid the ransom for us, Christ, who is nothing less than the Son of God. Scripture stresses particularly:

Romans 5:10: _____

Matthew 16:16 _____

1 Timothy 2:6 _____

Whoever denies that Christ in His God-Man Person and work of redemption is the object of saving faith cancels the Christian doctrine of justification and does away with all of Christianity. It is obvious then that the doctrine of Christ, that is the answer to the question, "Who do you say that I am?", must be kept pure.

In order to best utilize our time and to maintain interest we will divide this study into three major sections:

- (I) The Doctrine of the Person of Christ;
- (II) The Doctrine of the States of Christ;
- (III) The Doctrine of the Office of Christ.

I

The Doctrine of the Person of Christ

Summary

How many "natures" does Christ have? _____

Name them: (Gal. 4:4-5; John 1:1-2.14) _____

What do we know concerning these natures? Matthew 16:13-17 _____

Col. 2:9 _____

1 Cor. 2:8 _____ Rom. 5:10; 1 John 1:7 _____

What else do we know concerning what Christ was given according to Matthew 28:18;

Matthew 11:27; John 3:34-35

In Omnipresence included in this list? Why?

What do 1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14-15 tell us regarding Christ?

1 The True Deity of Christ

Scripture lays great stress on the nature of the Person of Christ and, particularly, His deity. It has been said that the Gospel does not require a "Christological" creed and that Christ did not insert the sentence: 'I am the Son of God,' into the Gospel. The very opposite is the case.

Look up Matthew 16:13ff.

It is on this confession that the Church of all ages has stood in the face of the contrary error, no matter how base or sophisticated.

One common error is that of the Unitarians:

Can you think of another heresy which denies the full deity of Christ?

How should we address this issue?

How did Jesus address this issue?

What of other divine attributes?

John 8:58

John 17:5_____

Heb. 1:10; John 1:3_____

Col. 1:16-17_____

John 21:17_____

John 10:28-30 _____

John 2:11; 1:14_____

What does all of this mean to mankind?

John 5:23_____

John 20:28; Phil. 2:_____

No one can answer the question how, with the divine essence being one in number, only the son, and not at the same time the Father and the Holy Spirit, could become man, other than that of Luther: I would be as sharp as any heretic if I could comprehend that. All attempts to explain this mystery are bad. On the testimony of Scripture the Christian faith is sure of these two things:

1) (Col. 2:9)_____

2) (Gal. 4:4-5)_____

What is it that prompts the denial of Christ?_____

What is Pelagianism?_____

How does this necessarily affect ones understanding of Christ?_____

How can I be sure that Pelagiansim and Synergism is not Scriptural?_____

2

The True Humanity of Christ

If some groups can argue that Jesus was truly man but not fully God then it makes sense that some people can argue that Jesus was truly God but not fully man. What are some of the errors in this regard?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

We do not subscribe to any other confession than that Christ is fully divine and fully human at the same time. While we have dealt with the deity of Christ we now examine the humanity of Christ.

Scripture teaches clearly and plainly the true and perfect humanity of Christ.

1 Tim. 2:5; John 8:40 _____

Matt. 8:20 _____

These terms describe Christ not as a phantom man, but as a genuine man.

John 1:14 _____

Rom. 9:5 _____

Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16 _____

Jer. 23:5 _____

Luke 2:7 _____

Luke 1:42 _____

In addition the Scripture names the constituent parts of the human nature of Christ.

John 2:21 _____ Luke 24:39 _____

Matt. 26:42 _____ Luke 23:46 _____

Luke 22:42 _____

Summing it up Scripture says . . . (Heb. 2:14) _____

It is certainly not on Scriptural grounds that one denies the true humanity of Christ.

From what does such a denial come? _____

What was rationalized? _____

What did the Pelagians fail to recognize in the Gospel message? _____

Why? _____

Why would these be disastrous in Scriptural soteriology? _____

Jesus also is ascribed by all the characteristics and activities of the human nature:

Is.. 53:11 _____ Luke 22:41 _____

Matt. 26:37 _____ 26:38 _____

Luke 22:44 _____ 22:42 _____

John 19:28 _____ 1 Pet. 2:24 _____

What does this evidence clearly tell us? _____

To bring out the practical importance of the deity and the humanity of Christ often ask this question: "Why was it necessary that Christ should be both true God and true man?" Their answer is substantially as follows: "It was necessary for Him to be a man that He might suffer and die; but as no mere man could bear the sin of the human race, together with the wrath of God and the curse of the Law, nor satisfy infinite divine justice, nor overcome death, hell, and the devil, it was necessary that He should at the same time be true God."

Finally we call attention to the words of Luther. "We Christians must know that if God is not also in the balance and gives the weight, we sink to the bottom with our scale. By this I mean: If it were not to be said, God has died for us, but only a man, we should be lost. But if 'God's death' and 'God died' lie in the scale of the balance, then He winds down, and we rise up as a light, empty scale. But, indeed, He can also rise again or leap out of the scale; yet He could not sit in the scale unless He became a man like us."

One who denies the vicarious satisfaction is really not concerned about either the true deity or the true humanity of Christ.

PECULIARITIES OF CHRIST'S HUMAN NATURE

1. The Human Nature of Christ Came in Existence Through the Operation of the Holy Spirit

How do we know this to be true? _____

2. The Sinlessness of the Human Nature of Christ

While all men are sinners (Rom. 3:10, 3:23) what do we know of Christ? 1 Pet. 2:22 _____

Is. 53:9 _____ Dan. 9:24 _____

2 Cor. 5:21 _____ 1 Pet. 1:19 _____

This is fact. Is it necessary? _____ What is the reason? _____

What is the cause of this sinlessness? _____

Luke 1:35 _____

Was Christ, according to His human nature also free from original sin? _____

Was it possible for Christ according to His human nature to commit a sin? _____

What are the consequences of the Sinlessness of Christ?

1) _____

2)_____

The Personal Union

What does the term "personal union" (*unio personalis*) mean?_____

This truth must be clearly perceived from the Scripture and must be maintained against all perversions. All aberrations in the doctrine of the Person of Christ result from abandoning the personal union and substituting for it some other sort of union.

There is the union of God with all creatures:

Jer. 23:24_____

God is essentially present in and with all His creatures, in particular, with all men. It is to this that all creatures owe their existence and activity.

Acts 17:28_____

Col. 1:17_____

In a special manner God is united with His Church, the believers.

John 14:23_____

Book of Concord, p. 550, line 65._____

2 Cor. 6:16_____ 1 Cor. 6:19_____

Eph. 1:23_____ 2 Pet. 1:4_____

All of this explains God's union with creation. But altogether different and much closer is the union of God and man in Christ: God and man form one Person. Because of this union, Scripture clearly and unmistakably calls God man and man God.

There is a danger in equating the union of Christ with the union of man and God. What is that danger?

But we can and must say with Scripture of the Man Christ:

Matt. 16:6_____

Luke 1:31-32_____

Jer. 23:5-6_____

Rom. 9:5_____

John 1:14_____

Rom. 1:3_____

These statements express this unique union of God and man in Christ, the personal union. The following statement is Luther's and unfolds the truth that though God is essentially present with all creatures, He is united with the Man Christ in one Person.

"The Deity is unmovable in itself and cannot proceed from one place to another. Therefore the Son of God did not [in His incarnation] climb down from heaven on a ladder or slide down a rope, but He is before His incarnation essentially and personally present in the virginal body, as in all other places, according to His divine nature, mode, and power.... But in Christ there is something different, something higher and greater than God's presence with other creatures: in Christ, God dwells also bodily in such a way that man and God are one Person. And although I may say of other creatures: There God is, or God is in it; never-the-less, I cannot say: 'That creature is God Himself.' However, of Christ the Christian faith not only says that God is in Him, but also declares: 'Christ is God Himself.' Whoever murders a man may truly be called a murderer of someone who is God's and in whom God is. But he who murders Christ has murdered God's Son, yes, God, the very Lord of glory." (St L.XX08.f)

It is of the utmost importance to maintain the uniqueness of this personal union. Not only must it be sharply distinguished from the union of God with all other creation and with the believers, but it must also be kept in mind that there is no analogy in all creation comparable to it.

Apart from Christ, God is not man.

Num. 23:19_____ Hos. 11:9_____

1 Sam. 15:29_____

Except in Christ, man is not God.

Acts 12:21ff. _____

Ezek. 28:2 _____

But in this unique Person of Christ, God is, in the true sense of the word, Man, and Man is, in the true sense of the word, God, because in Christ, God and man constitute one Person, one Ego.

Of course there are opponents that argue that it is "inconceivable" that God should be Man and man God and that God and man are united in one Ego. How should we reply?

Let us consider briefly some of the substitutes which have been employed in order to discredit this personal union.

A) _____

B) _____

C) _____

D) _____

E) _____

F) _____

G) _____

4

The Communication of Attributes

This chapter is unnecessary. At least it would be if the Scriptures would not have been questioned in their authority or if rationalists had not employed their tools inappropriately. The communication of attributes between the human and divine nature of Christ could have then been left to the discussion of the personal union. However, since this doctrine is extremely important in answering the central question of faith, our confession and articulation of central issues must not be stagnant. Three arguments which complicated the proper understanding of the personal union of Christ are as follows:

1. Although the incarnation of the Son of God, the personal union, and the doctrine of the two natures in Christ were accepted, the Son of God never-the-less was separated from the attributes of His human nature, as, for example, from the birth of Mary and the suffering and death, because it was said that it is impossible, indeed even blasphemous, to assume a real participation of the Son of God in such human attributes. So Nestorius, Zwingli, and many others, took this position.
2. Although it was granted that the Son of Man is the essential Son of God, and although with this admission the personal union of God and man was conceded, as was also the communion of the human nature with the divine Person of the Son of God, never-the-less the Son of Mary was separated from the divine attributes of the Son of God, because it was said the human nature is incapable of such divine attributes as, for example, divine power and, above all, divine omnipresence.
3. Lastly, it has been denied also that the human and divine natures perform jointly, in one divine-human act, whatever is peculiar to each. It has thus been said that the Man Christ performed His miracles in no other way than did the Prophets and the Apostles.

So we only briefly examine the communication of attributes with the understanding that as Christians we are not only called to proclaim the Gospel but to "convince the gainsayers...whose mouths must be stopped" (Titus 1:9-11).

The Communication of Attributes is divided into three categories or Geni: the idiomatic, the majestic, and the apotlesmatic.

The Idiomatic Genus

A) Illustration: _____

B) In the same way Christ has two distinct natures, a human and a divine, each of which has its own essential attributes, functions, and activities. But as both natures belong to the same Person, the attributes and properties of either may be ascribed to the Person.

Psalm 2:7 _____

Galatians 4:4 _____

Luke 3:23 _____

John 8:58 _____

C) The Bible even names the Person of Christ according to one nature, and predicates of Him attributes of the other nature.

Romans 1:3 _____

Acts 3:15 _____

1 Corinthians 2:8 _____

Thus we confess in the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed concerning Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that He was conceived and born, was crucified, dead and buried. As little as we may separate the human nature from the Son of God, so little may we separate from Him what this human nature did and suffered. In other texts the Savior is designated according to His human nature, but things are predicated of Him which properly apply to His divine nature (John 6:62).

So the Idiomatic genus is this, that such things as are peculiar to the divine or to the human nature are truly and really ascribed to the entire Person of Christ, designated by either nature or by both. It does not follow, however, that what is ascribed to the person is at the same time a property of both natures, or an inherent attribute of both natures, but it is distinctively explained what nature it is according to which anything is ascribed to the person. This means that things divine are ascribed to the entire Person of Christ but according to the divine nature, and things human are ascribed to the entire Person of Christ according to the human nature. (Look up page 598, lines 36 and 37 in the Book of Concord.)

The Majestic Genus

A) Illustration: _____

B) When the Son of God assumed the human nature, He imparted and communicated to it divine majesty, glory, and attributes. Thereby the majesty of the divine nature was in nowise lessened or divided, but remained fully intact in both natures. However, in the state of humiliation Christ did not always and fully manifest this divine majesty in His human nature. (Philippians 2:6-8)

Colossians 2:9 _____

1 Timothy 3:16 _____

John 1:14 _____

also: 2 Peter 1:17, 18; Matthew 17:1,2

John 17:15 _____

Dan 1:13, 14; Heb. 2:7,8 _____

Matthew 28:18 _____

Matthew 28:20 _____

As a result of the personal union of the two natures in Christ the human nature became omnipotent and omnipresent. That also the human nature of Christ is omnipresent we learn from Eph. 4:10. That Christ is omniscient we see from John 21:17 and John 2:24, 25.

C) While the divine attributes belong essentially to the divine nature, they belong by communication also to the human nature. Like as heat is communicated to iron, and life to the body, so is divine majesty communicated to the human nature because the divine nature is perfect, and nothing can be added thereto.

For further reading see the Book of Concord, page 600, lines 48-87.

The Apotelesmatic Genus

A) Illustration _____

B) The Word was made flesh for the express purpose of saving sinful mankind. Whatever the Savior did and still does to accomplish this blessed purpose may not be ascribed to either of His natures exclusively, but must be ascribed to both natures conjointly. Christ is our Savior not according to one of His natures, but according to both natures; the divine nature using the human nature as its organ, and participating in everything this nature did and suffered.

1 John 3:8_____

Heb. 2:14_____

Gal. 4: 4,5_____

Acts 20:28_____

2 Cor. 5:19: What was the work of Christ?_____

Also read Book of Concord, page 600, line 46.

II

THE DOCTRINE OF THE STATES OF CHRIST

Scripture sharply differentiates between the two states of Christ. The state of humiliation, in which Christ lived for thirty-three years as a lowly Sufferer and which culminated in His death on the Cross and His burial, came to an end when He entered the state of exaltation, in which He rose from the dead, was enthroned as the Ruler of the universe and Head of the Church, and will return visibly in divine glory for the Judgement.

The Old Testament establishes these two states:

Is. 53: 3-12_____

Ps. 8:6-10_____

Ps. 110_____

The New Testament unfolds these prophecies:

Luke 24: 26 _____

Phil. 2:7-9 _____

This discussion is a continuation of the discussion of the unio personalis. There is much confusion in Unitarian and Reformed circles as to the relationship of the divine and human natures in Christ. They say that the humiliation argues against the deity of Christ. Regarding Christ's elevation to the throne of world dominion and His presence with the Church also according to His human nature, the same people insist, this is incompatible with His true human nature. As pointed out, we have spent time examining the Scriptural reality of the union of God and man in Christ, however, this section will bring out the specific meaning of humiliation and exaltation.

1

The Nature of the Humiliation and the Exaltation

The Book of Concord has much to say regarding the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. Read Solid Declaration, Article VIII. Person of Christ, lines 8-30, 64-64, pages 593-604; and the Epitome, Article VIII, Person of Christ, lines 15 and 16, page 488-9.

The teaching of the Formula of Concord on the humiliation and exaltation may be summarized in the following manner:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
- _____

We could summarize this teaching with the words of two Lutheran dogmaticians. Baier writes: "The explanation of Christ pertains to His human nature and consists in this, that Christ for a time abdicated the full use of the divine majesty which the human nature received in the personal union by communications. The state of exaltation is that in which Christ, according to His human nature, after laying aside the infirmities of the flesh, assumed and exercised the full use of the divine majesty."

Hollaz says: "Christ did not always exercise in the same manner the divine majesty communicated to His flesh; but from His conception to His death and burial He retracted and restrained the full use of it; but in His quickening, resurrection, ascension into heaven, and exaltation to the right hand of God, He made plenary use of it. That accounts for the two states."

2

The Several Stages of Christ's Humiliation and Exaltation

Christ's humiliation includes all events of His earthly life, from His conception to His burial. Christ's descent into hell cannot be included in humiliation. This we will learn from Scripture.

How does Scripture designate the entire period of Christ's humiliation?

Heb. 5:7 _____

What does this mean? _____

Christ's Conception and Nativity

First let us state that the humiliation of Christ in the incarnation is connected with the mode or the manner in which He joined the human race (according to His human nature).

Gal. 4:4 _____

Luke 1:42 _____

The Son of God did not join the human race as a fully developed and mature man. He could have done so, but choose not to.

The question we have to answer is this: "Why do you suppose He came from the womb of Mary instead of just appearing on earth?"

This beginning of Jesus is characteristic of the official work which Christ was to perform as the Redeemer of mankind. Early in His life, in fact at conception, our Lord had to begin His redemptive work as our Savior.

What was the goal of Jesus' work? _____

Now we can answer the question: "Why do you suppose He came from the womb of Mary instead of just appearing on earth?"

Gal. 4:4-5 _____

What is the significance of this reality in terms of original sin and Baptism?

One theologian wrote, "Christ passed through all stages of our life in order that He might thoroughly heal...."

A word or two must be said regarding the operation of the Holy Spirit in the conception of Christ. What the Nicene Creed declares is entirely Scriptural: "Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost for the Virgin Mary, and was made man." Outside the incarnation of the Son of God the terms virginity and motherhood are contradictory. But in the case of Mary, the unique mother, the "blessed among women," they are not mutually exclusive. Any one who denies the virgin birth and adheres to it must be classified as heretic.

Christ's Education, Growth in Wisdom, and Visible Earthly Life

No schooling, of course, was necessary for Jesus in His childhood and youth in the sense that in Him evil propensities of the flesh had to be curbed, as must be done in the case of ordinary children.

Heb. 7:26 _____

Luke 2:48-49 (Who was right?) _____

What do we learn from Luke 2:52? _____

Regarding His visible earthly life what makes it humiliation?

Is it simply that He appeared among men? Matt. 25:31 ff; 1 Pet. 4:13; 2 Thess. 1:7 etc.

What does His humiliation consists of? _____

Christ's Suffering, Death, and Burial

Christ's suffering extends through the entire state of His humiliation. The whole history of Christ's earthly life, from His birth on, is truly a "Passion story."

The intensified suffering that came upon Christ during the last two days of His earthly life, on Thursday and Friday of the Passion Week, has been termed the Great Passion.

Part of this includes Matt. 27:46 _____

2 Cor. 5:21 _____

What does this mean? _____

This is clear from Ps. 69:5 _____

This also meant something else. Not only did Christ feel the guilt of all mankind but He felt something else. What was that?

How could the Son of God suffer an eternity while only being forsaken temporarily?

Luther says it very well: "This matter no man can so well depict in words as it is here stated in frank, terse, and plain terms. It does not treat of Christ's bodily suffering, which also was great and heavy, but of His deep spiritual suffering, which He felt in His soul and which far surpassed all bodily suffering ... In what this consisted no man on earth can understand, nor has any man the vocabulary adequately to describe and depict it. For to be forsaken of God is much worse than is death. Those who have tasted and experienced a little of it can somewhat sense it. But such as are secure, carnal, and have not endured or experienced such suffering neither know nor understand anything about it ... From Job's example we can somewhat understand what it means to

be forsaken of God ... And Christ has truly been forsaken of God, not in such a way that the deity has truly been separated from the humanity, but that The Deity withdrew into Itself and hid Itself ... So the righteous and innocent Man had to tremble and fear like a poor, condemned sinner and in His tender, innocent heart had to feel God's wrath and judgment over sin, taste for us eternal death and damnation, and, in short, suffer all a condemned sinner has deserved and must suffer eternally ... He had to quench and put out in His soul the extreme agony that is called 'being forsaken of God' and the devil's fiery darts, hell's fire and terror, and all that we had deserved by our sins. But this heaven, eternal life and blessedness, has been purchased for us, as also Isaiah says: 'He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.'"

This offends many Christians. They say that Christ was not damned. No less than John Calvin himself, believed this. He uses passages such as Matt. 3:17 to prove his opinion. He says that Is. 42:1 tells us that the Love and Wrath of God cannot mix..

Calvin writes: "We do not admit that God was ever hostile to Him, or angry with Him. For how could He be angry with His beloved Son, 'in whom His soul delighted.' (Is 42:1)?"

How would you approach this problem? And what does Calvin forget?

The death of Christ was a true death because in Christ's death occurred the very thing which constitutes the nature of death, namely, the separation of body and soul.

Matt. 27: 50 _____ Mark 15:37 _____

Luke 23:46 _____ John 19:30 _____

Does this mean that God died or that there was a break down in the economy of the Trinity?

Christ's Descent into Hell

The doctrine of Christ's decent into hell which we confess in the Apostles' Creed, is based on 1 Pet. 3:18 ff, where it is taught so clearly that the Church was justified in adding this doctrine to this Creed.

What does it mean that Jesus proclaimed victory?_____

Maybe the best way to say what happened is to determine what did not happen. The following are false teachings of Christ's descent into hell.

The descent of Christ does not mean ...

1)_____

2)_____

3)_____

4)_____

The summary on the events are as follows: Christ was put to death according to His lowly, earthly mode of subsistence in the state of humiliation and made alive according to His glorious, heavenly mode of subsistence in the state of exaltation. In this glorified state, as the exalted Savior and Lord, He went and preached to the spirits in prison.

The Resurrection of Christ

Who raised Jesus from the dead?

Rom. 6:4_____

Other such passages are; Eph. 1:20; Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10 etc.

John 2:19, 21_____

Also John 10:17-19

Both statements must be accepted side by side, as they read. The passages which ascribe the resurrection of Christ from the dead to God the Father refer to our Savior as the Mediator between God and man, on whom God had laid the "inequity of us all" (Is. 53:6; John 1:29) and whom the Father therefore had delivered into death for the sins of all men (Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3).

Rom. 4:25_____

What kind of justification does this verse refer to?_____

What does this mean?_____

What kinds of comfort can we derive from this understanding of justification?_____

In other words, our sins are not forgiven because we believe but because Christ was raised.

So the object of justification, as pointed out in Rom. 4:24 and Rom. 10:9, is also the object of saving faith, that is our risen Lord. It is not simply faith that is important but the object of faith.

What does John 20:20-27 tell us of the resurrection of Christ?_____

What must we recognize in the post-resurrected body of Christ?_____

Why do you think the door of the tomb was moved aside?_____

The Forty Days Between Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

There is an apparent contradiction during this period.

1. Luke 24:44_____

2. Luke 24:39-40_____

How are we to answer this?_____

After the resurrection Christ no longer needed food or drink to sustain His life, but He partook of food in the presence of His disciples to prove that He was the risen Savior (Luke 24:41-43).

The reason Jesus was still appearing to disciples is twofold:

1._____

2._____

In His discussions Jesus had a special subject. What was that? Luke 24:25-27

Christ's Ascension

The Resurrection had no witnesses. It needed none.

Acts 1:3_____

But the ascended Savior no longer shows Himself in visible form to His believers on earth until His return at the end of the world.

Acts 1:9_____

Christ's Session at God's Right Hand

The sitting at the right hand of God designates the unending dominion upon which Christ entered by His ascension.

What does the phrase "right hand of God" mean?_____

Christ's Second Advent

This is the last stage of Exaltation. This is treated in the section called "Eschatology" or End Times.

(Part III is being developed and will be posted when completed.)