

# The Nature of Christ

Christ is God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim 3:16)...The Word became flesh (John 1:14). He carries the perfection of humanity and divinity in His one person. When clarifying the nature of Christ, it is important to emphasize on three important facts:

1. The perfect divinity of Christ
2. The perfect humanity of Christ
3. The unique and perfect Hypostatic union of the divinity with the humanity.

Let's explain and simplify these three facts:

• **First fact:** Christ is perfect in His divinity, i.e. carries the same essence of divinity as that of the Father. On this topic we will have a detailed explanation in a separate article.

• **Second fact:** Christ is perfect in His humanity, i.e. carries a perfect human nature (Body & Soul.) The Bible shows that He resembled us in everything except sin alone and took our flesh perfect in all its minute details. And He lived in the world overcoming all warfares and redeemed us with that flesh which is equal to us.

If He had taken a body without the rational soul such that the divinity replaced it, then He would have redeemed animals only which have no human soul. This was the heresy of **Apollinarius**.

If His humanity dissolved in His divinity, as a drop of vinegar in the ocean, and vanished, the body of Christ would have been ethereal [an illusion] and He would have had only a single divine nature. This was the heresy of **Eutyches**. Based on this, our salvation would have also been nullified because the one who died was not a perfect man capable of representing mankind and redeem it. The true fact is that Christ took a perfect form of man from Virgin Mary... "He resembled us in everything except sin alone" (The Gregorian Liturgy)

• **Third fact:** The divinity of Christ and His humanity united in a perfect hypostatic union (The hypostasis of the Word united with humanity) in a personal and unique way since the moment of the divine conception after the annunciation by Angel Gabriel to Virgin Mary. This union between the divinity and the humanity is in such a way that it is not subject to separation or confusion. And like we say in the liturgy: Without mingling (as when wheat and rice are mingled together), without confusion (as when water and alcohol are fused [mixed] together), and without alteration (meaning that none of the attributes of the divinity or the humanity have changed after the union.)

**Saint Cyril the Great** gave a magnificent resemblance to this unique hypostatic union between the divinity and the humanity when he said that it is like the union of iron and fire. The union will produce red burning iron which carries all the characteristics of iron as well as the characteristics of fire. When we hammer it, it rings and it forms, as hammering affects the iron but doesn't affect the fire, although they are both completely united with one another and can't be separated. Saint Cyril emphasized that there is one nature out of two (miaphysite) for the incarnated God.

One of the most dangerous heresies which proclaimed two natures that can separate in critical situation is the heresy of **Nestorius**. This heresy was condemned by the Church in the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD. The Church then reaffirmed the one nature of God the incarnated Word and that Virgin Mary is the Mother of God the Theotokos. The Virgin Mary did not give birth to the human nature only and then it conjoined the divine nature, as **Nestorius** said. Rather she gave birth to the one nature of Christ perfect in His divine nature and perfect in His human nature as well!

For more details on this subject, please refer to the books: "Christology" by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and "The Nature of Christ" by Fr Tadros Malaty

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