

Associated Gospel Churches - Articles of Faith and Doctrine

**The Deity and the Virgin Birth
of our Lord Jesus Christ**

December 4, 2005

AGC Articles of Faith & Doctrine

III. The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

We believe in the essential deity of our Lord Jesus Christ and His total humanity through the virgin birth, and that all the Scriptures from first to last centre about Him, His person and work, His sacrificial death upon the cross and His coming again.

*Acts 26:22-23; John 5:39; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:35, 24:44;
Acts 17:2-3, 18:28; Isaiah 7:14; Acts 28:23 Acts 1:11*

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

Since Jesus Christ is fully God and one of the attributes of God is omnipresence, was He omnipresent while living on earth as a man?

Since Jesus Christ is fully God and one of the attributes of God is omniscience, how is it possible that he “grew in wisdom” (Luke 2:52)?

AGC Articles of Faith & Doctrine

III. The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

2 major points

- Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Man in one person, through the virgin birth**
- All the Scriptures from beginning to end centre on Him - on His person and work, His sacrificial death on the Cross, and His coming again**
 - a separate course in itself!!**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **The Virgin Birth**

- **Jesus conceived in Mary by work of the Holy Spirit, without a human father**

- **Matthew 1:18-23, Luke 1:34-35**

- **a key doctrine! - makes possible uniting of full deity and full humanity in one person**

- **full deity through conception by the Holy Spirit**

- **full humanity through His ordinary human birth from a human mother**

- **denial of virgin birth usually accompanied by other errors regarding the person of Christ**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **The Virgin Birth**
 - shows that salvation is a work of God
 - **God had to bring it about - not by human effort**
 - makes possible Christ's full humanity without original sin
 - **not descended from Adam in the same way as other humans**
 - **no transmission of original sin from Joseph**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **The Virgin Birth**

- makes possible Christ's full humanity without original sin

- **but what about inheriting original sin through Mary?**

- **Roman Catholics teach 'Immaculate Conception'**

- “The Most Holy Virgin Mary was, in the first moment of her conception... in view of the merits of Jesus Christ... preserved free from all stain of original sin.” (Pope Pius IX, 1854)

- **also believe Mary was free from all personal sin**

- **Problem: Why didn't Mary inherit original sin from her mother?**

- **more likely, the work of the Holy Spirit in Mary prevented transmission of original sin from Mary to Jesus**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- The Full Deity of Christ

- Direct Scriptural claims that Jesus is God

- the word ‘God’ (*Theos*) used of Christ

- “His name will be called... Mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6)

- “...our God and Savior Jesus Christ...” (2 Peter 1:1)

- the word ‘Lord’ (*kyrios*) used of Christ

- sometimes means ‘*sir*’ or ‘*master*’ (of a slave)

- but used to translate ‘Yahweh’ 6,814 times in Greek OT

- “In the beginning, O Lord [referring to the Son], you laid the foundations of the earth...” (Hebrews 1:10)

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **The Full Deity of Christ**

- **Direct Scriptural claims that Jesus is God**

- **examples of other claims to deity**

- “...before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58; cf. Exo 3:14)

- “I am the Alpha and the Omega...” (Rev 22:13; cf. Rev 1:8, where the Lord God is the Alpha and the Omega)

- “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word...” (Heb 1:3)

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **The Full Deity of Christ**
 - Evidence that Jesus possessed the attributes of deity
 - **omnipotence**
e.g. calming of the storm (Matt. 8:26-27)
 - **eternity**
e.g. John 8:58, Rev 22:13
 - **omniscience**
e.g. “Now we can see that you know all things...” (John 16:30)

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **The Full Deity of Christ**
 - Evidence that Jesus possessed the attributes of deity
 - **omnipresence**
e.g. “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” (Matt 18:20)
 - **sovereignty**
e.g. “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...” (Mark 2:10)

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Why was Jesus' full deity necessary?**
 - **Salvation is from God alone**
 - **Only one who is infinite God could bear the penalty of all the sins of all who would believe in Him - no finite being could**
 - **Only one who is truly and fully God could be the one mediator between God and Man (1 Tim 2:5)**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Why was Jesus' full deity necessary?**
 - If Jesus is not fully God, there could be no salvation
 - **groups that give up belief in the full deity of Christ are no longer Christian**

“No one who denies the Son has the Father.” (1 John 2:23)

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- The Full Humanity of Christ

- Incarnation

- the act of God the Son whereby He took to Himself a human nature

- “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14)

- a real and complete human nature, but without sin

- **docetism**: early heresy that Jesus was not really a man, but only appeared to be (*dokeo* = to seem, to appear)

- “...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. This is the spirit of the antichrist...” (1 John 4:2-3)

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **The Full Humanity of Christ**
 - Evidence that Jesus was fully human
 - **had a human body**
 - was born (Luke 2:7) and grew (Luke 2:40,52)
 - became tired (e.g. John 4:6), thirsted (John 19:28), hungered (Matt 4:2)
 - died (Luke 23:46)
 - **had a human mind**
 - “And Jesus grew in wisdom [i.e. learned]...” (Luke 2:52)
 - “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mark 13:32)

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **The Full Humanity of Christ**

- Evidence that Jesus was fully human

- **had human soul and emotions**

- “Now my heart is troubled...” (John 12:27)

- “...Jesus was troubled in spirit...” (John 13:21)

- “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow...” (Matt 26:38)

- “When Jesus heard this, He was astonished...” (Matt 8:10)

- **people around Him saw Him as only a man**

- “Coming to his hometown, He began teaching in their synagogue, and they were amazed. ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and there miraculous powers?’ they asked. ‘Isn’t this the carpenter’s son?...’ And they took offense at Him.” (Matt 13:54-57)

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Why was Jesus' full humanity necessary?**
 - **for representative obedience**
 - **Jesus, as our representative, obeyed for us where Adam failed (Romans 5:12-19)**
 - **to be a substitute sacrifice for us**
 - **"...it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (Heb 10:4)**
 - **"Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by his death He might destroy Him who holds the power of death... For this reason, He had to be made like His brothers in every way... that He might make atonement for the sins of the people." (Heb 2:14-17)**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Why was Jesus' full humanity necessary?**
 - to be the one mediator between God and Man (1 Tim 2:5)
 - to be our example and pattern in life
 - **“...Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.” (1 Pet 2:21)**
 - to be the pattern for our redeemed bodies

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Why was Jesus' full humanity necessary?**
 - so He could be a sympathetic High Priest
 - **“For this reason, He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God... Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.” (Heb 2:17-18)**
 - **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Heb 4:15-16)**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **How do full deity and full humanity co-exist in one Person?**
 - a mystery!
 - major controversy in the 4th-5th century Church
 - resulted ultimately in the classic Chalcedonian definition, (Council of Chalcedon, AD451)
 - placed boundaries on what constituted the correct doctrine of the Person of Christ
 - has become accepted as the orthodox definition of Biblical teaching on the Person of Christ for almost all branches of Christianity (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox)

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Some Inadequate Views**

- see also lesson on the Trinity of the Godhead for others (e.g. Arianism, etc.)

- **Apollinarianism**

- **taught by Apollinarius, bishop of Laodicea (c. 361 AD)**
- **taught that Christ had a human body, but not human mind or soul - mind and spirit came from the divine nature of the Logos**
- **rejected at Synod of Alexandria**
 - **human minds and souls also need salvation, not just bodies**
 - **Christ had to be *fully* human to save us**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Some Inadequate Views**

- **Nestorianism**

- **taught by disciples of Nestorius, a popular preacher at Antioch, and bishop of Constantinople (c.428 AD)**
 - **taught that there were 2 separate persons in Christ - a human person and a divine person**
 - **the man Jesus Christ was only a man to whom God was attached, not God Himself**
 - **Mary gave birth, not to God, but only to a man who was accompanied by God**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Some Inadequate Views**

- **Nestorianism**

- **problem: Scripture only speaks of Jesus as one person**

- e.g. “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ...”

- **opposed by Cyril of Alexandria**

- defended idea of 2 natures (human, divine) in one person

- defended inseparable unity of the 2 natures in Christ without any change to each nature

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Some Inadequate Views**
 - **Eutychianism/Monophysitism**
 - **led by Eutyches (c.378-454 AD), a monk**
 - **held that the human nature was taken up into the divine nature, such that both natures were blended/changed into a 3rd new nature**
 - like putting a drop of ink into a cup of water and mixing it
 - **problem: 3rd nature is really neither fully man nor fully God**
 - thus, not truly able to represent us as a man, nor able to earn our salvation as God

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Some Inadequate Views**
 - **Eutychianism/Monophysitism**
 - **condemned by the Council of Constantinople (448 AD), and opposed by Leo, bishop of Rome**
 - **still held by Ethiopian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, and Syrian Jacobite churches**
 - **ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451 AD)**
 - **issued classic statement of the doctrine of the Person of Christ**
 - **opposed Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **The Chalcedonian Definition - Key Points**
 - **Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man, consubstantial with the Father and consubstantial with us**
 - **Jesus possessed a rational soul and body**
 - **Jesus was one Person with 2 natures**
 - **the 2 natures are permanently distinct - inseparable and unchangeable - with the properties of each nature being fully preserved**
 - **Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, the Mother of God**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Later developments**
 - **5th ecumenical Council at Constantinople (553 AD)**
 - **reaffirmed Chalcedonian definition**
 - **6th ecumenical Council at Constantinople (680 AD)**
 - **affirmed that Jesus had 2 wills (a human will and a divine will)**
 - **human will seen as subordinate to the divine will, but the 2 always acted in perfect harmony**

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- **Other Inadequate Views**

- **Adoptionism**

- **7th-8th century controversy**
 - **championed by Felix, bishop of Urgella**
 - **saw divine side of Christ as the only begotten Son of God, but the human side as Son of God by adoption**
 - **adoption occurred at Jesus' baptism**
 - **condemned by Synod of Frakfort, 794 AD**

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- Other Inadequate Views

- the ‘Kenosis’ theory

- idea arising among German and English theologians in 1800s that Christ gave up some of His divine attributes while on earth

- a voluntary “emptying” (*kenoo* = ‘to empty’) of attributes such as omnipotence, omniscience, etc.

- based on dubious interpretation of one verse, Philippians 2:7 (“He emptied Himself...”)

- generally understood by the Church to mean emptying of status/privilege, not of nature of attributes

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Other Inadequate Views**

- the ‘Kenosis’ theory

- **basically, an attempt to alter the orthodox doctrine to make it more acceptable to modern psychological theory of the day**
 - **ultimately denies full deity of Jesus Christ**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **How do the 2 natures work together?**
 - e.g. how could Jesus Christ be omniscient, yet learn?
 - e.g. how could He leave the earth (at the Ascension), yet be omnipresent?

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **How do the 2 natures work together?**
 1. **One nature does some things the other nature doesn't**
 - **e.g. in account of His calming the storm (Matt. 8:23-26), Jesus was weak & tired (thus, sleeping) in the human nature, but omnipotent in the divine nature**
 - **tired, yet omnipotent!**
 - **in divine nature, continued “sustaining all things by His powerful word” (Hebrews 1:3), even as in His human nature He slept**
 - **e.g. in His human nature, had finite knowledge (e.g. Mark 13:32) and needed to learn and grow (Luke 2:52), but omniscient in His divine nature (e.g. John 16:30, 21:17)**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **How do the 2 natures work together?**
 1. **One nature does some things the other nature doesn't**
 - **e.g. in human nature was tempted in every way just as we are - yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15), but in divine nature cannot be tempted by evil (James 1:13)**
 - **but refused to use divine nature to make it easier for Him to obey (e.g. turning stones to bread)**
 - **e.g. in human nature died, but in divine nature did not die, as He was able to raise Himself from the dead (John 10:17-18)**
 - **e.g. in human nature, left the earth at the Ascension, but in the divine nature was omnipresent**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **How do the 2 natures work together?**
 2. **Anything that either nature does, the Person of Christ does**
 - **e.g. Jesus said, ‘Before Abraham was born, I am!’ (John 8:58), not ‘Before Abraham was born, my divine nature existed.’**
 - **e.g. ‘Christ died for our sins’ (1 Cor 15:3), even though strictly speaking, it was His human body that died, not His divine nature**
 - **thus, Christ could say, “I am leaving the world” (John 16:28), but also “I am with you always” (Matt 28:20)**

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **How do the 2 natures work together?**
 3. **Titles that remind us of one nature can be used of the Person of Christ, even when the action is being done by the other nature**
 - **e.g. ‘...crucified the Lord of glory’**
 - ‘Lord of glory’ reminds us of divine nature, but ‘crucified’ of human nature
 - **e.g. ‘No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son...’ (Mark 13:32)**
 - ‘Son’ reminds us of the divine nature, but it is the human nature that did not know

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Summary**

- **Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Man in one Person, through the Virgin birth**

- **hard to understand exactly this fits together**

- **a mystery!**

- **speaks to our own ignorance, not to its impossibility (as some would argue)**

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.” (Deut 29:29)

The Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

*“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of
God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths
beyond tracing out!*

*Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His
counselor?*

Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?

*For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To
Him be the glory forever! Amen.”*

Romans 11:33-36

Next class

The Personality, Deity and Present Mission of the Holy Spirit

December 11, 2005

References

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