

**APOLLINARIANISM:
The Denial of the Humanity of Jesus
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. One of the earliest problems which arose in the Lord's church had to do with the nature of Jesus while he was on earth, and a problem that is still with us today.
2. Evidence of this problem with the nature of Jesus while on earth is found in 1st and 2nd Jno., wherein he exposed the heresy of those he called the "antichrists" who were the forerunners of the Gnostics both of whom denied the true nature of Jesus while he was on earth.
3. The Gnostics thought that all physical things were of necessity evil, including the physical body of man.
 - a. Because of their view of all physical things being evil, they could not harmonize the fact that the divine Christ, the Logos, the Word, had a physical body – or could have a physical body.
 - b. Some of the Gnostics concluded that Jesus only *appeared* to have a physical body.
4. There is no doubt this is the heresy John was exposing in 1st and 2nd Jno., wherein he emphasized the physical nature of Jesus. Take note of:
 - a. 1Jno.1:1-3.
 - b. 1Jno.2:22,23.
 - c. 1Jno.4:1-3.
 - d. 2Jno.7.
 - e. Jno.1:14.
 - f. See also Ac.2:29-32; Rom.1:3.
5. Through the years, from the early centuries, there have been a variety of problems in the Lord's church over the true nature of Jesus while he was on earth, problems which still plague us today.
 - a. In the early 3rd century a teacher by the name of Sabellius taught that there was only one person in the Godhead, or one person who is God, and that he had projected himself in three different modes or roles – one as the Father, one as the Son, Jesus Christ, and another as the Holy Spirit – but that they were all one and the same person.

- (1) A modern form of Sabellianism is found in Unitarianism and Oneness Pentecostalism.
 - b. Arius of Alexandria taught early in the 4th century that Jesus was a created being.
 - (1) He believed Jesus could be referred to as a divine being because of his goodness and his complete obedience to the will of God.
 - (2) But he did not believe Jesus had the same nature as God or that he had ever had equality with God.
 - (3) A modern form of Arianism can be seen in the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses.
 - c. Nestorius, a bishop of Constantinople, taught that Jesus was actually two beings existing at the same time.
 - (1) One was the divine person who knew all things, could not be tempted, had all power, etc.
 - (2) The other was the human person who could suffer, be tempted, did not know all things, could grow in wisdom, etc.
 - (3) Some Oneness Pentecostals seem to be close to this position in some of their arguments.
 - d. Another ancient heresy on the true nature of Jesus was that taught by Apollinaris known as Apollinarianism.
 - (1) We deal with this now because even some brethren in Christ seem to want to resurrect this ancient heresy, which is a denial of the humanity of Jesus.
6. Question: Who was Apollinaris, what did he teach, and what is Apollinarism?
- a. Apollinaris or Apollinarius, bishop of Laodicea in Syria, the son of Apollinaris the elder, lived and taught his heresy in the 4th century A.D.
 - b. M'Clintock And Strong, Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological And Ecclesiastical Literature, Vol. 1, p.297, said, "His heresy became generally known A.D. 371."
 - c. Philip Schaff in his classic work, History of the Christian Church, wrote, "Apollinaris...in his zeal for the true deity of Christ, and his fear of a double personality, he fell into the error of denying his integral (whole or complete, ejd) humanity. Adopting the psychological trichotomy, he attributed to Christ a human body, a human

- (animal) soul, but not a human spirit or reason; putting the divine Logos in the place of the human spirit.” (Vol.III, 1910, pp.709,710.
- d. Bro. Roy Lanier, Sr. in his book, *The Timeless Trinity for the Ceaseless Centuries*, wrote, “There was another sect known as the Apollinarians (A.D. 381) who denied the humanity of Jesus, in that, though they believed he had a human soul, the animal life, yet he did not have a human spirit as other men have. They believed that the Logos, Word, took the place of the human spirit.” (1974, p.254)
 - e. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church summarizes some of Apollinarius’ views by stating, “The objects of Apollinarianism, the first great Christological heresy, were:(1) to assert the unity of the Godhead and manhood in Christ, (2) to teach the full Deity of Christ, and (3) to avoid teaching that there was moral development in Christ’s life. To gain these ends, Apollinarius asserted that in man there coexist body, soul, and spirit. In Christ, however, were to be found the human body and soul, but no human spirit, the spirit being replaced by the Divine Logos. Thus, while He possessed perfect Godhead, He lacked complete manhood.” (1983, p.72)
7. Several objections were raised against Apollinarism.
 - a. One was that this view “denied the completeness (TELEIOTES) of his humanity.” (Schaff, Vol. III, p.711)
 - (1) Regarding this point Schaff relates that “Epiphanius expresses himself concerning the beginning of the controversy ...: ‘Some of our brethren...have thought that the spirit...should be excluded from the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, and have preferred to hold that our Lord Christ assumed flesh and soul, but not our spirit, and therefore not a perfect man.’” (Ibid)
 - b. Another objection was that this view denied the fact the Jesus is our example. “The fundamental objection to Apollinarius’ teaching from the point of view of Catholic orthodoxy is that if there is no complete manhood in Christ, He is not a perfect example for us, nor did He redeem the whole of human nature, but only its spiritual elements.” (The Oxford Dict. of the Christian Church, 1983, p.713)
 - c. Some saw that Apollinarius was teaching that Jesus was “as a man” and not really a man. “Christ was really ANTHROPOS, not merely HOS ANTHROPOS, as Apollinarius taught on the strength of Phil.2:7.” (Schaff, Vol. III, p.713.)
 8. Finally, we offer this summary list of some of the major views of Apollinarius, after which we shall summarize the aspects of each one listed and discuss them in light of what some brethren today are teaching with reference to each point listed.
 - a. He believed that Jesus only appeared to be a man; He was not fully human as you and I are.

- b. To Apollinaris, Jesus did not have a human spirit, but that the divine spirit took on a fleshly body.
- c. Because of his deity Jesus was able to overcome the temptations placed before him by Satan.

II. DISCUSSION

A. APOLLINARIANS BELIEVE THAT JESUS ONLY APPEARED TO BE A MAN.

1. Recall with me the following facts regarding the Apollinarian heresy on this point.
 - a. “denied the humanity of Jesus...” (Lanier, Sr., *The Timeless Trinity*, p.254)
 - b. “while He possessed perfect Godhead, He lacked complete manhood.” (Cross, *The Oxford Dict. of the Christian Church*, p.72)
 - c. “denied the completeness (TELEIOTES) of his humanity.” (Schaff, III, 711)
 - d. “He is not a perfect example for us, nor did He redeem the whole of human nature, but only its spiritual elements.” (Cross, *Ibid.*, 72)
2. Question: Do we have any today who deny that Jesus was fully human? Yes, we do. Unfortunately, we have some brethren who do so!
 - a. Bro. Geo. P. Estes, in his article, “The Deity/Humanity Controversy,” *The Preceptor* (Vol. 41, No.9): Sept. 1992, p. 258, wrote: “Phil.2:6-8 does not prove that Jesus became a human at His birth. ‘Form’ (morphe) means the essence. Before His birth He was of the same essence as God. ‘Emptied Himself’ means He gave up this state of existence and took the form of existence of a bond servant or slave. But this does not say that Jesus became a human.”
 - b. Bro. Estes also said, “ ‘Flesh and blood’ in Heb. 2:14 means no more than a physical body. The statement that Jesus had to have human nature to be our Savior is false.” (*Ibid.*, p.259)
 - c. Bro. Gene Frost, in his article, “What Was ‘Emptied’?”, *Gospel Anchor* (Vol. 17, No.4): Dec., 1990, p.52, wrote: “ ‘...the power of the higher divine nature was united in Him with the human appearance, which was not the case in other men. The nature of Him who had become man was, so far, not fully *identical* with, but substantially *conform (in likeness)* to, that which belongs to man.’ Note that Jesus was not in fashion *a man*, but ‘*as a man*.’ ”
 - d. Bro. Dudley Ross Spears, in his lecture, “The Mind of Christ,” *The Lord of Glory*, Temple Terrace, FL: Florida College Bookstore, 1980, p. 19, said: “His outward appearance was simply outward adornment and really had nothing to do with His internal substance. The human and physical part of Jesus was only an interlude in His eternal existence. It was the outward disguise that

lasted during the time He was in the body made for Him by the Father (Heb.10:5).”

- e. This same preacher further said on p.20: “Likeness does not mean anything more than similarity. It is not sameness. The word Paul used here for ‘likeness’ does not imply the reality of the Lord’s humanity like the word he used to describe the reality of His deity. He is simply saying that Jesus resembled men from an outward view.”
 - f. Bro. Earl I. West, in his article, “Difficult Texts from Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians,” *Difficult Texts of the New Testament Explained*. Montgomery, AL: Winkler Publications, 1981, p. 295, said: “One must be careful not to conclude that Jesus merely appeared to be man for the expression in the original language suggests ‘sameness of nature.’”
3. These examples of brethren denying that Jesus was a complete man are the complete opposite of what brethren through the years have taught regarding the humanity of Jesus.
- a. See pp.6,7,8, Apollinarianism: The Denial of the Humanity of Jesus, from the book “the man Christ Jesus,” edited by Ronny Milliner, Faith and Facts press, 1994.
 - b. Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Vol. II), 1950, p. 675: argues, “Resolve all signs of humanity into mere appearance, and you lose the divine nature as well as the human; for God is truth and cannot act a lie.”
 - c. He later adds, p.704: “This seems to us a virtual denial of the unity of Christ’s person, and to make our Lord play fast and loose with the truth. He either knew, or he did not know; and his denial that he knew makes it impossible that he should have known in any sense.”
4. The author of the book of Hebrews suggests several reasons why Jesus was “made a little lower than the angels,” that is, why he had to become human.
- a. The first one was to subject the world to himself, Heb.2:5-9.
 - b. Reason two is given in Heb.2:10. Jesus had to come to this earth and experience humanity in order to be perfected through sufferings. Cf. Heb.5:8,9.
 - c. The third reason Jesus had to become man was in order to be the brother of those who are being sanctified. Heb.2:11-13.
 - d. The fourth reason given for Jesus becoming a little lower than the angels was that he might destroy him who had the power of death, Heb.2:14-16.
 - e. The fifth reason Jesus became a man was to aid those who are tempted, Heb.2:17,18. Cf. Heb.4:14-16.
 - f. The sixth and final reason the Hebrew writer gives for Jesus becoming a little lower than the angels was that he might be qualified to be our High Priest, Heb.5:1-4.

- (1) Notice two qualifications had to be met:
 - (a) He had to be “called by God,” 5:5,6.
 - (b) He had to be “taken from among men,” 5:7-10. (Of course in order to be taken from among men, he would have to have been a man.)

B. APOLLINARIANS BELIEVE THAT JESUS DID NOT HAVE A HUMAN SPIRIT.

1. Again we summarize some of the quotes on this point of this doctrine with which we began:
 - a. “attributed to Christ a human body, a human (animal) soul, but not a human spirit or reason; putting the divine Logos in place of the human spirit.” (Schaff, Vol. III, p.710)
 - b. “believed he had a human soul, the animal life, yet he did not have a human spirit as other men have. They believed that the Logos, Word, took the place of the human spirit.” (Lanier, *The Timeless Trinity*, p. 254)
 - c. “In Christ, however, were to be found the human body and soul, but no human spirit, the spirit being replaced by the Divine Logos.” (Cross, *The Oxford Dict. of the Christian Church*, p. 72)
 - d. “the spirit...should be excluded from the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, and have preferred to hold that our Lord Christ assumed flesh and soul, but not our spirit, and therefore not a perfect man.” (Schaff, III, p.711)
2. Once again take note that we have some brethren today who are teaching this very concept, that is, Jesus did not have a human spirit. To them the incarnation only involved the divine spirit taking on a body of flesh and blood.
 - a. “God is His father, so how could he be human and have a human nature? Jesus did not have a human father which would be necessary if He was a human being. ‘Flesh and blood’ in Heb.2:14 means no more than a physical body. The statement that Jesus had to have human nature to be our Savior is false.” (Geo. P. Estes, “The Deity/Humanity Controversy,” p.259)
 - b. “He did not have the same spiritual nature as we...Christ’s spiritual nature was still equal to the Father. In appearance, He was like every other man.” (T. Doy Moyer, “The Nature and Temptation of Christ,” *Gospel Anchor* (Vol. 17, No. 4): Dec. 1990, p. 58.)
3. On this point and in discussing the fact that Jesus “gave up the spirit” at his death on the cross according to Jno.19:30, Bro. Lanier says, “This was not the Holy Spirit that came to him at his baptism, but the human spirit which went to Paradise (Lk.23:43); it was the soul which was not left unto Hades (Ac.2:27).” [*The Timeless Trinity*, p. 261]

- a. While on the cross, Jesus said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” Lk.23:46.
 - b. If Jesus had no human spirit, what did he commend to the hands of the Father?
 - c. Consider Isaiah’s prophecy in Isa.7:14 concerning the virgin birth then Matthew’s account of its fulfillment of it in the virgin Mary giving birth to Jesus in Mt.1:18-23; then Jno.1:14 declaring that “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”; then Phil.2:7,8 declaring that Jesus “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.”
 - (1) In spite of this, notice what one brother wrote in commenting on Isa.7:14: “This prediction and its fulfillment say that the Son born of the virgin would be ‘God with us,’ not man with us, nor a God-man with us...God is His father, so how could he be human and have a human nature. Jesus did not have a human father which would be necessary if He was a human being.” (Geo. P. Estes, “The Deity/Humanity controversy,” pp. 258,259.)
4. Apollinaris argued “that the Scripture says, the word was made flesh – not spirit...”
- a. The truth of the matter is that the term “flesh” (SARZ) was used by synecdoche (a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole). In this case, for the whole human nature.
 - b. So the word “flesh” refers to all of the human being, not just his physical flesh and blood.
 - c. W.E. Vine’s, II, 107,108, definition on the word “flesh” states, “by synecdoche, of the holy humanity of the Lord Jesus, in totality of all that’s essential to manhood, i.e., spirit, soul, and body.”
 - d. Strong, in his *Systematic Theology*, also says, “The word SARZ here has its common New Testament meaning. It designates neither soul nor body alone, but human nature in its totality...for a manhood that consists only in body is no proper manhood.” (Vol. II, 687)

C. APOLLINARIANS BELIEVE THAT JESUS OVERCAME TEMPTATION BY HIS DEITY.

- 1. Frederick Norris shows Apollinaris’ view of the temptation of Christ when he wrote, “For him, the divine Logos took the place of the human mind and will in Jesus so that the divine would be predominant, sin avoided, and salvation ensured. No conflict of intellect or will could occur because Jesus had no human intellect or will. The oneness of Christ’s person was clear, since only the unity of divine mind and soul with a human body could have provided all the parts of a human being necessary for existence.” (“Christ, Christology,” *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. pp. 201, 202)

2. Bro. Colly Caldwell also wrote of the Apollinarians saying they taught, “the only life principle in Christ was the Logos ...and therefore all human involvement in Jesus was ‘passively’ observed but not really experienced. Jesus consequently did not have a human will and did not participate in human thought processes (learning, etc.). Neither was he really tempted.” (C. G. “Colly” Caldwell, “Historical Positions on the Deity of Christ,” *Guardian of Truth* (Vol. 27, No. 9): May 5, 1983, p. 274)
3. Once again we see some similar statements being made today by some brethren in Christ.
 - a. When asked if Jesus could be tempted as a human spirit is tempted today, one brother replied, “No.” This brother went on to say, “The temptation was there in the flesh, not in the spirit.” (Gene Frost, “The Deity of Christ,” Beaver Dam Bible Study, Beaver Dam, KY, Jan. 1991)
 - b. Brother Fred Amick has gone to great length to try to prove that Jesus not only could not sin, but that he could not even be tempted in the same way we are tempted. He has said in his booklet, *Our Sinless High Priest*:
 - (1) Jesus “was completely above temptation,” p.6.
 - (2) “Even the possibility of sin is a moral weakness; it is a spot of darkness in our lives,” p.7.
 - (3) “It is our human natures that lead us into sin. If it was Christ’s nature that kept Him from sinning, obviously, His human nature was entirely different from our human natures...” p. 17.
 - (4) “All believers understand that Christ was not ‘like unto His brethren’ ...in their sinful dispositions,” p. 17.
 - (5) “Partaking of Christ’s human nature does not teach us one thing that will help us to escape from the unlawful desires of our own human natures,” p.16.

III. CONCLUSION

1. For obvious reasons this subject is important. As bro. Leslie Diestelkamp once wrote, “If we fail to understand the physical nature of Christ, we will likewise fail to comprehend the full significance of his suffering and death. It was not a god, but a man that died on the cross.” (“Who Is This Jesus?”, p. 142)
2. Indeed if Jesus was not fully human then “the world is faced with a series of serious conclusions:
 - a. He is not man’s example, for he does not really know from humanities experience the agony of temptation and the fight of desires to go contrary to God’s will;

- b. All stories and statements about such in the Bible are just a sham, playacting for the benefit of gullible man;
 - c. He is not the 'last Adam,' as affirmed in 1cor.15:22,45;
 - d. He has not conquered death and **destroyed** the works of the devil as per 1Jno.3:8 and Heb.2:15
2. In studying and emphasizing:
- a. The humanity of Jesus Christ it takes nothing away from one's fully believing and accepting the Deity of Jesus Christ.
 - b. The Deity of Jesus Christ it takes nothing away from one's fully believing and accepting the humanity of Jesus Christ.
 - c. It merely proves the truth concerning his identity and nature.
3. The fact that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, lived as a man in the flesh, was tempted in all points as we are yet without sin, takes from us any justification or excuse for us in attempting to explain away our failures to obey God with the statement, 'I'm only **human**, you known!'
- a. Bro. Robertson L. Whiteside, Com. on Romans, commenting on Rom.8:3; 1Tim.2:5; Heb.2:14,17, wrote: "But Jesus was made in all things like his brethren and was without sin, it shows conclusively that sin is not a part of man's nature. When Adam and Eve were first created, they had all that belongs to human nature. Sin came into their lives as a foreign element. Sin is no more a part of your nature than dust in your eye is a part of the nature of your eye. Because the desires, appetites, and passions of the flesh so often lead to sin, flesh is called sinful. But we should remember always that fleshly desires lead to sin only when the mind, or heart, purposes to gratify the flesh in an unlawful way." (pp.169,170)

(Credit to Bro. Ronny Milliner, from his article, Apollinarianism, from the book "*the man Christ Jesus*", edited by Ronny Milliner, Faith and Facts Press, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1994)