

Summary of Notes on the History of Christological Doctrine  
Many of the Heresies and Controversies  
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I. Christology in the Sub-Apostolic Age. (90-140)

No official formulation in N. T. times--uniqueness everywhere acknowledged. Purely humanitarian view held only by the Ebionites.

1. The Apostolic Fathers--a variety of ideas.
  - (1) Pre-existence assumed but not defined.
  - (2) Sonship held but not developed.
  - (3) Incarnation: two tendencies.
    - a. Adoptionism.
    - b. True incarnation.
2. Ignatius.
  - (1) Jesus the center of his thoughts--Johannine.
  - (2) Emphasis on historic Jesus--anti-docetic.
  - (3) Unique relation of Father and Son--filial subordination in Sonship.
3. Gnostic Christology.
  - (1) Docetic--dualistic.
  - (2) Cosmic significance rather than redemptive.
  - (3) Relation of Christ to God not clear.
4. Apostle's Creed.
  - (1) Trinitarian.
  - (2) An insistence on history--humanity.
  - (3) Sonship emphasized.

II. Beginnings of Christological dogma.

1. Apologists. (130-180)
  - (1) Proposed to give a scientific rendering of the Gospel. Christ as the higher knowledge.
  - (2) Logos Christology--cosmology is the center of reference rather than soteriology.
    - a. Logos is the mediator between God and the world--is finite.
    - b. He alone is called Son.
    - c. Little attention given to incarnation.
    - d. Justin makes a faint beginning of the two natures doctrine.
2. Irenaeus. (d. ca. 200)
  - (1) Known as Biblical theologian--middle of the road.
  - (2) Eschewed speculation.
  - (3) Starts with historic Jesus--personal pre-existence.
  - (4) Person and work are one organically.
  - (5) Affirmed, both deity and humanity.



3. Monarchianism.
  - (1) Dynamic Monarchianism.
    - a. The more rationalistic type.
    - b. Unipersonality of God.
    - c. Adoptionism--Jesus only a man filled with the divine influence.
  - (2) Modalistic Monarchianism.
    - a. Christ is only one mode of revelation--not a personal distinction.
    - b. Sabellius the most important here--modalism quite conscious of itself.
4. Tertullian. (195-220)
  - (1) Holds essentially a Logos Christology.
  - (2) Logos was pre-existent potentiality in God--generated before all worlds.
  - (3) Relation of the three persons: one divine substance with economic distinctions.
  - (4) Subordinationism.
  - (5) Incarnation.
    - a. Virgin birth.
    - b. An act of unconditioned power and freedom--God born and crucified.
    - c. Christ an individual man.

### III. The Ascendancy of the Logos 'Doctrine.

1. The Alexandrian theologians.
  - (1) Influenced by Neo-Platonism--a dynamic pantheism.
  - (2) Clement.
    - a. Revelation of God interpreted by means of Logos doctrine.
    - b. Incarnation--close to docetism.
  - (3) Origen.
    - a. Logos is central--Father must communicate himself.
    - b. Logos is eternal, personal---eternal generation.
    - c. Two hypostasia but homoousia
    - d. Subordinationism--because Christ is created.
    - e. Incarnation.
      - (a) Soul bound the Logos and flesh together.
      - (b) Incarnate person as a whole is said to be Son.
      - (c) Humanity is gradually deified--communication of idioms.
2. Correspondence of the Dionysii.
  - (1) Trouble arose over the inconsistencies in Origen.
  - (2) Dionysius of Alexandria exaggerated the subordinationism.
  - (3) Dionysius of Rome affirmed homoousios.
3. Paul of Samosata. (260-269)
  - (1) Ablest expositor of dynamic monarchianism.
  - (2) Started with O. T. idea of God.
  - (3) In the man Jesus there dwelt the divine Logos--impersonal.

- (4) Jesus, though superior to all other men, is from beneath.
- (5) Relation of God and Jesus--perfect unity--attains to perfect unity with God.

#### IV. The Arian Controversy.

##### 1. Arius.

- (1) Sets out a transcendent monotheism--God abstractly perfect and infinite. No distinctions, no contact with the world.
- (2) Son is pre-existent but not unbegotten--no identity of essence.
- (3) Son is mediator of creation.
- (4) Son participates in the divine Logos by grace.
- (5) The most worthless of all the Christologies, in history!

##### 2. Nicene Creed.

- (1) Bishop Alexander excommunicated Arius in 321.
  - a. Maintains the essential unity of the Father and Son.
  - b. Two natures in the divine substance are not one but are like in all points.
- (2) Council of Nicea--325.
  - a. Three parties-represented: Arians led by Eusebius of Nicomedia. Alexander's party--favoring identity of essence. A middle group led by Eusebius of Caesarea.
  - b. Resulting Creed.
    - (a) Christ designated Son.
    - (b) Christ one with the Father in essence, is uncreated, personally distinct.
    - (c) True humanity.

##### 3. Athanasius.

- (1) Played a large part at Nicea through Alexander, his bishop.
- (2) Leading thought is that God himself entered human history for redemption.
- (3) Sharply opposed Arius.
- (4) Place of Christ is within essential Godhead--one in essence with the Father--but an independent personal being.
- (5) Son comes forth from Father by birth or generation-not emanation.
- (6) Sonship replaces speculative Logos doctrine--basic interest is religious.

##### 4. Marcellus of Ancyra.

- (1) Sabellian in tendency--main interest in the unity of God.
- (2) Rejected term "Son"--favored Logos--humanity only temporary.
- (3) Expansion and contraction of the divine Monad.

##### 5. Semi-Arianism.

- (1) A strong resurgence of Arianism after 351.
- (2) The semi-Arians thus driven closer to the Nicene theology.

## 6. Cappadocian Fathers headed the younger Nicene party.

Basil of Caesarea

Gregory of Nazianzus

Gregory of Nyssa

Began with the three hypostases and proceeded to explain the unity.

## V. Controversies as to Full humanity.

## 1. Apollinarianism.

(1) Apollinaris sought to secure the unity of the person without sacrificing the real deity.

a. Body and soul of Jesus were human but the human spirit was replaced by the divine word.

b. An essential union of God and man in one nature.

c. Docetic--no real incarnation.

d. Defines God and man as totally disparate.

(2) Apollinarianism combatted by the two Gregories: even they greatly overshadow the humanity--it is swallowed up in the deity.

(3) Apollinarianism condemned at the 2nd Ecumenical Council at Constantinople, 381.

## 2. The School of Antioch:- Nestorius.

(1) Theodore of Mopsuestia.

a. Attempts to give validity and reality to the moral development of Christ.

b. Only a relative moral union of Godhead and manhood.

c. Two independent natures--"Jesus a God-bearing man"

d. Loses sight of Christ as redeemer--resembles Paul of Samosata.

(2) Nestorius. (428)

a. Brought the tendency of Antioch into the open.

b. Denied that Mary bore the Godhead--only the man who was the instrument of the Godhead.

c. The historic Christ--single, but of two natures--is his point of departure. The natures distinguished, but are inseparable.

## 3. Cyril of Alexandria.

(1) Essentially continues the theory of Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus.

(2) Opposed to Antioch's denial of the complete union of the two natures.

(3) Starts with the Logos--who takes impersonal human nature.

(4) Christ is one out of two natures--one divine-human nature.

## 4. Council of Ephesus 431--rejected Nestorius and was largely Cyrillian in favoring one person.

## 5. The Eutychian Controversy--Chalcedon.

### (1) Eutyches.

- a. Denied real humanity
- b. Only one divine nature after the incarnation.

### (2) Leo of Rome opposed Eutyches.

- a. Taught two natures.
- b. Distinguished between "nature" and "hypostasis."
- c. The two natures retain identity but are united in one person with a communication of idioms.

### (3) Chalcedon--the 4th Ecumenical Council--451.

- a. Leon accepted as the norm of orthodoxy.
- b. Reaffirmed Nicea and Ephesus.
- c. The unity proclaimed by Chalcedon is a purely marvelous one--God and man are simply yoked together.
- d. Soteriological interest in upholding the genuineness of the incarnation.

## 6. Monophysite and Monothelite Controversies.

### (1) Monophysites started from the concrete reality of the Divine-human Christ.

- a. Two natures can be distinguished only in theory.
- b. To distinguish the natures would be to posit two persons.
- c. Leontius countered with enhypostasia
- d. The 5th Ecumenical Council defended Chalcedon in a Cyrillian sense: no human personality in Christ--the two natures distinguishable only in theory.

### (2) Monothelites.

- a. Prior to the 6th century no one spoke of two wills.
- b. Emperor Heraclius (630) declared one will only.
- c. West blazed into revolt.
- d. The 6th Ecumenical Council in 680 declared for two wills--related as the two natures--the human subordinate to the divine.

## VI. Augustine and the Middle Ages--Later Christology in the West.

Theology in the East petrified.

Latin Church more concerned with the means of salvation than with the person of Christ.

### 1. Augustine.

#### (1) Not original or creative in Christology.

#### (2) Two tendencies:

- a. Tends to keep the two natures separate.
- b. But, in explicit statement he shares the Cyrillian docetism: the personal factors supplied by the Divine Word and the human nature is deified.
- c. Popular expression tends towards docetism.

2. Spanish Adoptionism.
  - (1) Elipandus of Toledo and Felix of Urgel meant to safeguard the real humanity overshadowed by the semiMonophysite reading of Chalcedon.
  - (2) Opposed by Alcuin--the person of man perishes in union with the divine and only the impersonal nature of man remains.
3. The Middle Ages.
  - (1) Added little to Christology--other mediators such as the virgin Mary were brought forth as the historic Christ faded more and more into the background.
  - (2) Anhypostasia maintained--but outside of formal Christology there was a strong emphasis on manhood.
  - (3) Thomas Aquinas.
    - a. Largely monophysite.
    - b. The natures brought into a common relationship to the Logos rather than into a union.
  - (4) Duns Scotus. a. Sharply distinguishes between the natures and faintly hints at an imitation in Jesus' human experience.

## VII. Christology of the Reformation Churches.

1. Luther.
  - (1) A deeper understanding than any since the Apostolic age.
  - (2) Person and work of Christ are one organic unity.
  - (3) Starts with the human life--limitation and growth.
  - (4) Strong emphasis on deity.
  - (5) Real, vital union of the two natures in one person.
2. Lutheran and Reformed Christologies.
  - (1) Took over the orthodox Christology of the ancient Church--as in the Creeds--and settled into a dead formalism.
  - (2) Lutheran Christology--follows Alexandria.
    - a. Eager to bring out the unity of the divine-human life.
    - b. Communication of the divine attributes to the human.
  - (3) Reformed Christology--follows Antioch.
    - a. The two natures held in rigid separation.
    - b. Humiliation is the incarnation.
    - c. Logos governs the world from outside of Christ.
3. Socinus.
  - (1) Doctrine must be logical.
  - (2) Denied the God-man--illogical.
  - (3) Could accept the Apostle's Creed.
  - (4) God not personally present in Jesus.

## VIII. Christology in the 19th Century.

1. Theocentric and Anthropocentric conceptions--a matter of order--the modern problem is to relate the truly human Jesus to the inner life of the Godhead. Background is the Aufklarung.

2. Schleiermacher.
  - (1) Jesus the supreme, final mediator--salvation is indissociable from his person.
  - (2) Point of departure is experimental--Who and What is Jesus--to explain what he does for me.
  - (3) A unique presence of God in Christ--a creative act.
  - (4) Jesus is archetypal man--yet excludes moral conflict.
  - (5) Missed the real truth of incarnation.
  
3. Hegel and the Hegelians.
  - (1) Hegel.
    - a. Man ultimately identified with God.
    - b. History is God's self-realization.
    - c. Christ's deity and atonement important--but as a symbol of the metaphysical idea.
    - d. Jesus important as the first to perceive the great speculative principle for which Christianity stands: that God and man are one.
  - (2) Strauss.
    - a. Gospel is mainly myth.
    - b. Christ is unsurpassable founder of Christian religion.
    - c. Christ is important as a symbol of the idea of the identity of man and God.
  - (3) Biedermann.
    - a. Distinguished between principle of redemption and the person of the redeemer.
    - b. Jesus the first to become conscious of the principle.
  
4. Kenotic theories.
  - (1) Sought to do justice to real self-limitation.
  - (2) Thomasius
    - a. Jesus underwent veritable human development.
    - b. Relative attributes temporarily held in suspense.
  - (3) Gess--kenosis extended to immanent attributes also.
  
5. Mediating: Dörner.
  - (1) Man and God are spiritually kin--affinity of natures.
  - (2) Starts with the unity of the person.
  - (3) Unity not complete from the beginning--a growth in God-humanity.
  
6. Ritschl.
  - (1) Christ has for us the value of God.
  - (2) Cannot explain the significance of Jesus.
  - (3) Omits metaphysics--pre-existence and exaltation omitted.
  
7. Modern Radical School.
  - (1) Run counter to the N. T.--and are aware of it.
  - (2) Jesus is hero or religious genius--one of many religious leaders.
  - (3) Interest in the religion of Christ--not the religion about him.