Introduction to Christology

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“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and without Him, not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory the glory of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”
John 1:1-5, 14

Approaching Christ…

- Please share with those around you, in about a paragraph how you understand Christ.
- What are some things that have helped you to understand Jesus Christ more fully in your life?
- As you share with each other, please write down common themes and other themes that may be significant.
Approaches to Christology

- The ‘Human to Divine’ Approach
  - Anthropomorphic Jesus
  - Over-emphasis of Feeling Identification with Christ

- The ‘Divine to Human’ Approach
  - Emphasis
    - Faith Assumption
    - Divinity absorbs humanity
  - Cultural Clashes
    - Culture and Scientific Development cause the ‘Hermeneutic of Suspicion’
    - Leads to a preference toward the ‘Divine to Human’ among some
    - Leads to a preference toward the ‘Human to Divine’ among others

The Approach of the Church: The Incarnational Approach

- Employing this Approach Requires the use of “lenses”
  - Historical Lens
    - Jesus was a specific person, in a specific culture, who lived at a specific time
  - Faith Lens
    - What we know about Jesus comes to us through the lenses of Faith
  - Human Lens
    - We are not God, we are human.
    - Our connection with, and approach to, Christ is his humanity, not divinity!

Jesus & Messiah/Christ

- Jesus = “God Saves”
  - The Culmination of the Hebrew Tradition that leads to a full recognition of the saving Power of God.
- Christ: Literally -- “Anointed”
- Who was anointed in the Hebrew Tradition?
  - Priests
  - Prophets
  - Kings
Priest

- Mediator between God and Humanity
- Representative of the people to God, and of God to the people.
  - Intermediary
  - Sacrificial role
    - Mediation through the Priest
    - Difference between Hebrew and Christian Priesthood
- Analogous to “Legislative”

Prophet

- Proclaim Faithfulness to God
- Warn as to what will happen if not faithful
- Proclaim what will happen when faithfulness reaches its fullness
  - The Beatitudes
  - Faithfulness in its fullness is the in-breaking of the reign of God
    - The Fullness of Faithfulness is not in any human ability, but for Grace.
- Analogous to “Judicial”

King (The Good King)

- Decides aright for the people
  - Ensures the welfare of and for the individual and the community
- King was often seen as the ultimate “High Priest”
  - Portraying the desires of God to the People
- The King is to implement the prophetic values…
  - Mercy, Justice, Humility
- Analogous to “executive”
The ‘Incarnational’ Approach

- Names and Roles are Human
  - Priest, Prophet & King are Human Experiential Roles
- We may only Approach Christology from Human Experience
  - We know nothing else
  - To argue differently is root of ‘original sin’
    - “God knows you most certainly will not die, he is afraid you will become ‘like him’.
- Human Experience is our Connection and Identification Point with Christ

The ‘Incarnational’ Approach

- Human Experience
  - Incapability of understanding anything else
  - Places us Historically
  - The vehicle for revelation
  - Our Worries, Our Idols

Jesus Christ: Son of God

- Jesus is Known as the Son of God
  - Son = Child of…direct descendent of…
  - Implies more than biological production
    - Implication and manifestation of Sonship
    - Relationship with the Parent
  - CCC 444 – “Only in the Paschal Mystery can the believer give the title ‘Son of God’ its full meaning.”
**Jesus Christ: Lord**

- The Conception of Jesus Lordship is directly tied to the Messianic Mission.
  - In the Hebrew understanding of the Messiah, the entire world would be changed.
  - Therefore, in this conception, the entire world becomes subjected to Christ, the Messiah, who has changed and transformed the World.
    - Shalom – “Peace”
    - More than Peace – Rooted in the Completion and Perfection of the World. The Hebrew Messiah was to bring Shalom!
    - Understanding Shalom helps us, in fact, empowers us to understand Jesus as Lord.

**Key Component: The Ecclesial Nature of Knowing Christ, The Incarnation**

- Read Article: Benedict XVI, “Christ and the Church”, March 15, 2006

- What stands out for you in what you read?

- How does this understanding challenge our common understanding of coming to know Christ?

**The Historical Development of Christology**

- The Gospels
- The Gnostic Heresies (2nd century)
- The Adoptionism Heresy
- The Arian Heresy
- The Council of Nicea (325)
- The Nestorian Heresy
- The Council of Ephesus (431)
- The Monophysite Heresy
- The Alexandrine/Antiochene Controversy
- The Council of Chalcedon (451)
The Historical Development of Christology

- The Gospels – 4 views of Christ
- The Gnostic Heresies
  - Gnostic Beliefs
    - Gnosis – Secret Knowledge that will allow one to be saved
    - Gnosticism is characterized by radical dualism
      - Flesh = evil
      - Spirit = good
  - Based on this information, why would the Christian understanding of Jesus be threatened?

The Historical Development of Christology

- Catholic Response to Gnosticism
  - Christ’s message was/is not secret.
    - Public and accessible to all
  - Redemption is not just ‘Spiritual’, it is physical.
    - Affirmation of the Fullness of the Incarnation
    - The redemption of the entire human person, and nature, not just the spiritual
    - The world and shalom

The Historical Development of Christology

- The Adoptionist Doctrine
  - Jesus Christ was born solely a Human Person (not divine), and because of his fidelity to God and the Covenant, God adopts him into “Sonship”.

- How might this affect ‘salvation’?
The Historical Development of Christology

- The Church’s Response to Adoptionism
  - If Jesus is not Naturally God, Redemption is not universal...
  - Redemption must be universal
  - Unique finality of Christ

From Arius’ Writings

“But we say and believe, and have taught, and do teach, that the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way part of the unbegotten; and that He does not derive His subsistence from any matter, but that by His own will and counsel He has subsisted before time and before ages, as perfect God, only begotten and unchangeable, and that before He was begotten, or created, or purposed, or established, He was not. For He was not unbegotten.”

The Council of Nicea (325)

- Leader in response to Arius is Athanasius
- When we make The Word a Created being, Two things happen:
  - We take away the ability to save
  - Salvation must be rendered by God alone
  - We allow for a possibility that God’s Action in Christ is not Final
  - God could create someone greater than Christ
- Therefore Christ, must be one in the same with the Father.
The Council of Nicea (325)

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten of his Father, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made, both in heaven and on earth. Who for us men, and for our salvation came down and was incarnate and was made man. He suffered and the third day he rose again, and ascended into heaven. And he shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost. And whosoever shall say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, or that before he was begotten he was not, or that he was made of things that were not, or that he is of a different substance or essence or that he is a creature, or subject to change or conversion – all that so say, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them."

Understanding The Humanity of Jesus through Understanding Mary

- Theotokos Controversy
  - Is Mary the 'Mother of God' or 'God Bearer'?
  - The Fear of 'Mother of God'
  - Elevation of Mary to Divinity
  - The Need of 'Mother of God'
    - For Christ to be fully human!
- The Necessity of the Virgin Birth
  - Functional – No Doubt about the Divinity and Nature of Christ
    - The argument also applies to the doctrine of Perpetual Virginity
  - Theological – God’s complete and Full Initiative
    - Creatio ex Nihilo
    - The Virgin Birth presents the Dual Natures of Christ.

Understanding The Humanity of Jesus through Understanding Mary

- Immaculate Conception
  - Mary, conceived without Original Sin, has no innate desire for self...
  - Fiat: Let it be done....
- Mary as the 'New Eve'
  - As the mother of Christ who gives all new life, then, she becomes the mother of all the living.
  - Mary is the model of the Church, and through her the church finds its identity to be Theotokos for the world that is bound to Sin and Death.
The Historical Development of Christology

- The Nestorian Heresy
  - Nestorius believed that in Christ there were two persons
    - Divine Person of the Word
    - Human Person of Jesus
  - What is lost?

- The Church’s Response
  - If there are two persons in Christ, then there was not an Incarnation.
    - If there is not an incarnation, there is no salvation, or whatever salvation there may be is not universal.
  - Here begins the Theotokos debate

- The Monophysites
  - Jesus is only divine who assumes the human person and nature.
  - Loses the True sense of the Incarnation
    - But begs the question – Wouldn’t the divinity over-ride the humanity????
Homoousios & Hypostaseis

- The Greg’s
  - Gregory of Nazianzus (Homoousios – One Nature or Substance)
    - "The Father is the Begetter and the Emitter, without passion of course, and without reference to time, and not in a corporeal manner. The Son is the Begotten, and the Holy Ghost the Emission...There never was a time when He was not. And the same thing is true for the Son and the Holy Ghost...the cause is not necessarily prior to its effects, for the sun is not prior to its light."
  - Gregory of Nyssa (Hypostaseis – Three Persons)
    - The three persons always act in concord with the One Substance that is Divinity (Economic Trinity)
      - System of Operation

Alexandrian – Antiochene Controversy

- Alexandrian School (Divine Emphasis)
  - Belief in Divinity of Christ is Stressed
  - Because Christ is one person, then he is the Divine Person
  - One Person who is Divine
  - This line of thought can lead to an understanding that the Divine overrides the human.

- Antiochene School (Human Emphasis)
  - In order for salvation to be fully effected, Jesus has to be fully Human.
  - Word becomes flesh
  - One person who has two natures
    - Fully Human
    - Fully Divine

Chalcedon

- Council of the Church in 451
  - Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ...He is of the same reality as God as far as his deity is concerned and of the same reality as we are ourselves as far as his human-ness is concerned; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted...we apprehend this one and only Christ – Son, Lord, only begotten – in two natures; without confusing the two natures, without transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or function. The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead, the ‘properties’ of each nature are conserved and both natures concur in one person and in one hypostasis.
### Hypostatic Union

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 person</th>
<th>An Analogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Substance</td>
<td>1. Substance = Hybrid</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### The Problem

- Even after Chalcedon’s Definition we can easily eliminate the Human nature.
- Jesus then becomes a “Divine Puppet”
- Rock, Paper, Scissors
  - Just as Rock always trumps Scissor, Paper trumps Rock and Scissor trumps Paper – *Divinity will always trump humanity?*

### Jesus’ Humanity

**KEY POINT TO REMEMBER:**

- *Embrace of Humanity does not imply a Denial of Divinity*
- Culture could Assume Faith – Church Could assume Belief
- What feast is the high point of the Liturgical Year?
  - **Christmas**  **Easter**
- Jesus was not a Divine Puppet!
Establishing a Christological Hermeneutic

What we must discuss...

- Out of the Enlightenment
  - Hermeneutic of Suspicion

- Creating a Dialogue
  - Between Faith and Culture
  - Between Faith and Reason
  - Between Human and Divine

- No Longer a presumption of faith belief.

Further Principles in Roman Catholic Christology

- Corpus Triforme
  - If Christ is the full revelation of the Father, then it is important that we understand His action through:
    - the Hebrew Scriptures
    - the New Testament
    - the Church
  - Revelation is complete in Jesus Christ.
    - Human understanding is progressive

Our Christological Lens in this Class

- Incarnational Approach: Human experience is the only lens with which we are able to approach Christology
  - Jesus humanity is a reality (Incarnation)
  - Enlightenment Culture = Human is to be 'Actualized'
- Christology = In the model of Christ, Humanity is transcended in an ascending fashion, toward God
  - Human Actualization is Human Transcendence
  - Knowing that I am made, not for self, but to be transcended toward and by, God.