**8**

**The Identity of Jesus Christ**

**I. The History of Christology**

* Essentials: (1) fully divine nature; (2) fully human nature; (3) one Person (*hypostasis*)
* The “hypostatic union”

***A. A Tale of Four Cities***

*Jerusalem and Athens.*

* Jerusalem: Jewish interest in Jesus as the (human) Messiah, doing divine *acts*
* Athens: Graeco-Roman interest in the *being* of the divine *Logos*

*Alexandria and Antioch.*

* Alexandria: Site of Origen’s 3rd century school; emphasis on the divine *Logos* animating human flesh (John 1:14)
* Antioch: Site of some 4th–5th century influence; emphasis on the union of the divine with a fully human person

***B. A History of Heresies***

Ebionism

* Arose late 1st or early 2nd century; a Jewish version of “adoptionism”
* Denied that Jesus was divine (only the human Messiah, a divine representative)

Docetism

* Arose 2nd–3rd centuries; overlap with “gnosticism”
* Denied that Christ was genuinely human (e.g., only appeared to be)
* Rejected thanks to the influence of Tertullian and Irenaeus regarding the “rule of faith”

Arianism

* Arose early 4th century; most popular, often returning, heresy
* Denied that Jesus was *fully* divine (only a quasi-divine creature, not eternally self-existent)
* Condemned in 325 at Nicaea and again, thanks to Athanasius, in 381 at Constantinople

Apollinarianism

* Arose later 4th century; Alexandrian overreaction against Arianism
* Denied that Christ was *fully* human (only a human body and soul, not mind/spirit)
* Condemned in 381 at Constantinople, thanks to Cappadocians

Nestorianism and Eutychianism

* Arose 5th century; N. from Antiochene extreme, E. from Alexandrian overreaction
* N. denied the personal union, E. the distinction, of the two natures
* N. jeopardized the full divinity, E. the full humanity, of the Person
* Condemned in 451 at Chalcedon, thanks to Cyril of Alexandria and Pope Leo I

***C. An Ongoing Odyssey . . .***

Medieval Piety and Philosophy

* Piety:
  + Iconoclast controversy: Nicaea II (787) defended icons by appealing to the Incarnation
  + Increasing role of Mary and saints as mediators (with decreasing attention to Christ’s humanity?)
  + Popular/mystical focus on Jesus’s bloody wounds
* Philosophy: Development of complex concepts (abstract debates?) in the West

Protestant Controversy and Reform

* Reform: Increased appeal to biblical narrative of Christ as gracious Mediator
* Controversy: Debate between Lutherans and Calvinists over how the *communicatio idiomatum* (“communication of [divine and human] attributes” in the Incarnate Son) relates to Jesus’s presence in the Lord’s Supper (ubiquitous in his humanity, or not?)

Modern History and Humanity

* History: Quests for the “historical Jesus”
* Humanity: Focus on Jesus’s self-understanding 🡪 “kenotic” Christologies

**II. The Biblical Grammar of Orthodox Christology**

***A. The “Son” in Scripture***

* Jesus = Savior
* Christ = Anointed One, Messiah (prophet, priest, king)
* Lord = in some texts, identified with Yhwh (God’s OT covenant name) via *Kyrios*
* I Am = refers to Yhwh, especially in John’s Gospel
* Son of Man = Jesus’s favorite self-designation in the Synoptic Gospels; focused on his humanity but possibly a veiled pointer to eschatological hope and to his divinity
* Son of God = favorite identifier of Jesus Christ in the Epistles; sometimes suggests his divine preexistence as eternally “begotten” of the Father

***B. The Son’s Divine Identity as Good News***

* Worship is at stake: *Lex orandi lex credendi* (“the law of prayer is the law of faith”)
* Salvation is at stake: God alone saves, and “what is not assumed is not healed”