

THE PERSON OF CHRIST
Part I: The Ancient Church

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I. INTRODUCTION.

The focus of our class takes another turn as our topic changes from the Doctrine of God to Christology, particularly the Person of Christ in His incarnation. The explanation of the “*Logos-sarx*” (Word or deity - flesh or incarnation) in Christ came on the heels of the Arian controversy. Harnack wrote (*History*. IV, 138): “It accordingly had already necessarily emerged in the Arian controversy, for it was in reference to the thought of the union of Godhead and humanity that the whole controversy was carried on by Athanasius.” Up to the time of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) the same writer asserts that “no single outstanding church teacher really accepted the humanity in a perfectly unequalled way. Further than that, it was necessary to believe in an actual ‘incarnation of the Logos’ all else was uncertain (*History*. IV, 139).” The purpose of this initial lesson shall be to trace the opinion of the early church from Clement of Rome (ca. 95) to Apollinarius (d. 390) in an attempt to understand their doctrine of the incarnate Christ.

II. THE PERSON OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH FATHERS.

As has been noted previously, the Fathers were not given to theological speculation, but were pastoral in character and tone. As one turns to the Person of Christ, however, they are far from silent.

A. Clement of Rome

According to the testimony of Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*. III, 3.3), Clement of Rome handed on the apostolic teaching intact in his letter to the Christian community at Corinth.

1. Clement clearly understands the ordering of salvation from God in Christ and the Spirit (*To the Corinthians*, 42).

“The Apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both therefore came of the will of God in the appointed order. Having therefore received a charge, and having been fully assured through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and confirmed in the Word of God with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth with the glad tidings that the kingdom of God should come.”

2. Clement speaks of the incarnation of Christ in these terms (*To the Corinthians*, 16, 2), “The sceptre of the majesty of God, even our Lord Jesus Christ, came not in the pomp of arrogance or of pride, though He might have done so but in lowliness of mind according as the Holy Spirit spake concerning Him.” Clement then quotes Isaiah 52-53.
3. Clement also speaks of Christ as the preexistent Son of God. Chapter 36 is a particularly beautiful rehearsal of Hebrews 1.
4. After His exaltation, He was united with the Father in glory and receives divine honor (32:4; 38:4; 43:6; 58:2; 63:3; 65:2).

B. Ignatius of Antioch

1. Ignatius speaks of the incarnation as material to exclude all hint of “semblance” (to dokein). “For if these things were done by our Lord in semblance, then am I also a prisoner in semblance (Deut. 4:3)”. He denies any attempt to have a docetic Christ.
2. Ignatius has a text about Christ’s natures that was often quoted in later history (*To the Ephesians*, 7, 2). “There is only one physician, of flesh and of spirit, generate and ingenerate, God in man, life in death, Son of Mary and Son of God, first passible and then impassible, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Grillmeier stated

of Ignatius (*Christ and Christian Tradition*. I, 89), “Though the static character of a ‘two nature’ Christology may become visible as early as Ignatius, a full, living dynamic is evident throughout his writings.”

N.B. The Christology of the Fathers is much clearer than their understanding of other areas of theology. With the possible exception of Ignatius, the Fathers did not venture into speculation (i.e., Christ was simply Logos and sarx). Grillmeier wrote (*Christ and Christian Tradition*. I, 105), “Despite this emphatic delineation of the God-manhood of Jesus Christ, there is still no doctrine of two natures in a technical sense.”

III. THE PERSON OF CHRIST IN THE APOLOGISTS.

The church was brought to a definition of its understanding of Christ by external pressure applied by heathen philosophers who attacked the faith. Celsus (ca. 178) confronted the theology of the church with a dilemma, either docetism or a change in the Godhead. Origen quoted Celsus (*Against Celsus*. IV, 18), the early accuser: “Either God really changes himself, as they say, into a moral body . . . or he himself is not changed, but makes those who see him think that he is changed. But in that case he is a deceiver and a liar.” The church was forced to reckon with true humanity and true deity.

A. The Person of Christ and Western Apologists.

1. **Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 140–202 A.D.)**, wrote Cullman (*Christ and Time*, 56-57), “recognized so clearly that the Christian proclamation stands or falls with the redemptive history.” He battled the Gnostics, particularly Basildes and Valentinus (also Marcion), who denied His true humanity (taught that He was an emanation) and full deity. Of the God-man, so fundamentally integral for redemption, he writes (*Against Heresies*. III, 16): “There is therefore . . . one God the Father, and one Christ Jesus our Lord, who came by means of the whole dispensational arrangements and gathered together all things in himself. But in every respect, too, he is man, the formation of God: and thus he took up man into himself, the invisible becoming visible, the incomprehensible being made comprehensible, the impassible becoming capable of suffering, and the Word being made man, thus summing up all things in himself: so that as in super-celestial, spiritual and invisible things, the Word of God is

supreme, so also in things visible and corporeal he might possess the supremacy and, taking to himself the preeminence, as well as constituting himself head of the church, he might draw all things to himself at the proper time.”

Irenaeus so stressed the unity of Christ (pre and post incarnation) that his oft-repeated phrase (“Christ, one and the same”) will appear seven times in the Chalcedon Creed.

N.B. Irenaeus’ thoughts will be deepened and delineated by the theologians. Irenaeus, with his stress on flesh to oppose the Gnostics, does not delineate the nature of Christ’s soul and so has been called an Apollinarian (not so!).

2. **Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 155–240/60 A.D.)**, as in the Trinitarian issue, laid the foundation for the resolution of the Christological debate in the West. Tertullian began his confrontation of Praxeas with firm Trinitarian presuppositions. Tertullian argued for substances in Christ (*Against Praxeas*. XXVII, 14).

“Learn therefore with Nicodemus that what is born in the flesh is flesh and what is born in the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6). Flesh does not become spirit nor spirit flesh. Evidently they can (both) be in one (person). Of these Jesus is composed, of flesh as man and of spirit as God: and on that occasion the angel, reserving for the flesh the designation Son of Man, pronounced him the Son of God in respect of that part in which he was spirit.”

The conjunction between the two and permanent realities, the Godhead and the man Jesus, occurs in one person (his logic is that of his Trinitarianism—God is different in persons, one in substance). He wrote (*Against Praxeas*. XII, 6): “You have two (Father and Son) one commanding a thing to be made, another making it. But how you must understand ‘another’ I have already preferred, in the sense of person, not of substance.” Hence, he argues for two natures in the one Christ.

- N.B.** Tertullian’s thought still needs refinement, but his striking contribution was his stress on “one person” in Christ.

3. **Hippoleetus of Rome (ca. 170–225 A.D.)**, a mentor of Irenaeus, speaks of Christ in two stages of existence (preexistent and incarnate). He assigns sonship to the incarnation. He wrote (*Refutation of All Heresies*, 15): “And he has taken for humanity the new name of love by calling himself Son; for neither was the Logos before the incarnation and when by himself yet perfect Son, although he was perfect Logos, only begotten, nor could the flesh exist by itself apart from the Logos, as it had its existence in the Logos. Thus, then, was manifested one (single) perfect Son of God.”

N.B. Hippolytus, however, makes no explicit mention of the problem of the conjunction of the two natures.

B. The Person of Christ and the Eastern Apologists.

1. **Melito of Sardis (ca. 170)**, appears to have been the first in the church to speak of Christ’s two natures. Eusebius quoted Polycrates (*Church History*. V, 24) that this man, a eunuch, was a defender of the church in Asia Minor and in V, 28 that he announced Christ as “God and Man.” In resisting the Gnostics, he presses the true humanity of Christ within the matrix of biblical redemption.
2. **Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–211/16 A.D.)**, comes to the issue of the incarnation through the veil of Platonic thought. His framework did not prove to be an advantage. While he maintains the reality of the human nature of Christ, his penchant for spiritualization makes the incarnation relative. Grillmeier wrote (*Christ and Christian Tradition*. I, 136), “We find in Clement precisely the element of the non-Christian Logos doctrine which leads to the total obscuring of the distinction between Logos and soul in his Christology.”
3. **Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185–253/54 A.D.)**, apart from his stress on philosophic forms, seeks to postulate a twofold rule in Christ, the one Christ. He wrote (Commentary on John I.28): “Whereas some are led by Christ as the ‘shepherd’ because they are capable of being guided and the part of their soul which is outside reason is tranquil, others come to him as the ‘king,’ who rules over the rational spirit and raises it up to worship God. But there are also differences among those who are under his sovereignty, depending on whether a man is ruled over

mystically and with inexpressible mystery, according to God's fashion, or in a lesser way. I would say that those who attain to the sight of incorporeal things . . . are removed outside all matters of the senses by the 'Word.' They are ruled royally by the guidance of the Only-Begotten. However, those who only penetrate as far as the word of sensual things and reverence the Creator through these, are also ruled by the Word and to the same degree stand under the Lordship of Christ. But let no one take offence if we distinguish aspects of the Redeemer in this way, and think that as a result we are transferring a division into his very being."

The incarnation to Origen means the real arrival of the Logos, but the human Jesus appears to be subordinated. At any rate, the conjunction of the Logos and humanity is real and permanent. Origen errs in a serious way in saying that the human soul of Christ becomes full divinized and is aglow as iron in a fire (*Trinity*. II, 6).

N.B. The point that this writer is attempting to demonstrate is that by the late third century the church had made no significant strides in speculative theology. The West, without a Greek philosophic framework, was able to see in Christ, the one Christ, two persons. Beyond that they did not go. Grillmeier stated (*Christ and Christian Tradition*. I, 148-49): "It is clear from this survey that the rise of Christological reflection was a very slow process. The main emphasis was laid on the theological interpretation of the relationship of Father and Son, though this was seen to be closely connected with the incarnation. Over against the Gnostics and the docetists, the theologians of the church had above all to stress the duality of the two natures of Christ and their reality. True, the first reflections on the problem of the unity of Godhead and manhood are made. The Fathers know that the incarnate Logos is 'one and the same.' But this unity is more intuitively seen than speculatively interpreted. It can—with the sublimity of the *Mysterium Christi* in the Christian faith—also be no more than a matter of the first repulse of the attacks which, for example, Celsus had made against the Christian doctrine of the incarnation."

IV. THE PERSON OF CHRIST IN THE THEOLOGIANS.

As one enters the period of the theologians, Seeburg's summary is perhaps important to have in the mind (*The History of Doctrine*, 243):

“Two things had been transmitted by tradition as fixed: the reality of the humanity of Christ, with his human activity and sufferings (recognized in conflict with Docetism in the second century), and the reality and *Homousia* of his divinity. Divinity and humanity are now combined in one person; there is a synthesis (*autheton*, Origen), but as to the question how this union was conceivable, especially how two personal natures can constitute one person, there was no further investigation, despite the propositions put forth by the Dynamistic Monarchians. Only the West possessed, in Tertullian's view of one person in two substances, a formula which appeared to adequately meet the situation, and which had been confirmed fuller development of the doctrine of the Trinity. Western theologians, with this theory in hand, felt themselves from the necessity of further investigation, and in the conflicts of the succeeding era they presented it as an adequate solution of all the questions raised in the Orient.

A. The Person of Christ and the Apollinarian Controversy.

The development of the Apollinarian-Christological debate must not be divorced from the Arian Controversy which in reality occasioned the unfolding in vivid relief of the discussion on Christ's person. Heick wrote (*History*. I, 171): “The third stage of the development came when men, satisfied as to the divinity and humanity of Christ, were compelled to ask the next question: What is the relationship between the divine and the human in Christ?” Tertullian anticipated Chalcedon when he wrote (*Against Praxeas*, 27), “We see His double state, not intermixed but conjoined in one person, Jesus, God and man.”

1. **The formulation of Apollinarius (ca. 310–90 A.D.)**, bishop of Laodecia, attempted to answer the question of the Logos-sarx relationship by a synthesis of body and soul within substantial unity (one nature). His thought evidences the echoes of Origen with the concept of an emerging soul that combines the two natures into one. In brief, Apollinarius evidences two interests in developing Christology: the integrity of the person Christ (to combat the Arians) and the immutability of Christ. Gregory of Nazianzen writes (*Oration*. IV. 19, 308): “For He Whom you

now treat with contempt was once above you. He Who is now Man was once the Uncompounded. What He was He continued to be; what He was not He took to Himself. In the beginning He was uncaused; for what is the Cause of God? But afterwards for a cause He was born. And that cause was that you might be saved, who insult Him and despise His Godhead, because of this, that He took upon Him your denser nature, having converse with Flesh by means of Mind. While His inferior Nature, the Humanity, became God, because it was united to God, and became One Person because the Higher Nature prevailed . . . in order that I too might be made God so far as He is made Man. He was born—but He had been begotten: He was born of a woman—but she was a Virgin. The first is human the second Divine. In His Human nature He had no Father, but also in His Divine Nature no Mother. Both these belong to Godhead. He dwelt in the womb—but He was recognized by the Prophet, himself still in the womb, leaping before the Word, for Whose sake He came into being. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes—but He took off the swathing bands of the grave by His rising again. He was laid in a manger—but He was glorified by Angels, and proclaimed by a star, and worshipped by the Magi. Why are you offended by that which is presented to your sight, because you will not look at that which is presented to your mind? He was driven into exile into Egypt—but He drove away the Egyptian idols. He had not form nor comeliness in the eyes of the Jews—but to David He is fairer than the children of men. And on the Mountain He was bright as the lightning, and became more luminous than the sun, initiating us into the mystery of the future.”

Again (*Letter to Nectarius*, 438): “For he asserts that the Flesh which the Only begotten Son assumed in the Incarnation for the remodeling of our nature was no new acquisition, but that carnal nature was in the Son from the beginning. And he puts forward as a witness to this monstrous assertion a gargled quotation from the Gospels, namely, No man hath Ascended up into Heaven save He which came down from Heaven, even the son of Man which is in Heaven. As though even before He came down He was the Son of Man, and when He came down He brought with him that Flesh, which it appears He had in Heaven, as though it had existed before the ages, and been joined with His Essence. For he alleges another saying of an Apostle, which he cuts off from the whole body of its context,

that The Second Man is the Lord from heaven. Then he assumes that that Man who came down from above is without a mind, but that the Godhead of the Only-begotten fulfills the function of mind, and is the third part of this human composite, inasmuch as soul and body are in it on its human side, but not mind, the place of which is taken by God the Word. This is not yet the most serious part of it; that which is most terrible of all is that he declares that the Only-begotten God, the Judge of all, the Prince of Life, the Destroyer of Death, is mortal, and underwent the Passion in His proper Godhead; and that in the three days' death of His body, his Godhead also was put to death with His body, and thus was raised again from the dead by the Father."

The Christology of Apollinarius arises from a trichotomist presupposition: the deity occupied (supplanted) the human spirit so that in the one person a human body and soul was joined to divine reason. Gonzalez wrote (*History*, I, 358): "In this way Apollinarius saved the immutability of the Word, which is always the active agent and never passive, in the life of Christ. At the same time, he solved the problem of how two natures—the divine and the human—can unite without forming a new nature. Christ is human because his body and his soul—or vital principle—are human; but he is divine because his reason is the very Word of God. If in Christ there were united a complete man, with his own personality and his own reason, to the Son of God, two persons would result, and this would destroy the reality of the incarnation, which states that in Christ God was united with man. Apollinarius, then, found no other solution than to mutilate the human nature of Christ, taking away its rational faculties, and putting the Word in the place these should occupy."

Kelly summarized Apollinarius' position thusly (*Early Christian Doctrine*, 191-92): "In order to eliminate the dualism which he considered so disastrous, Apollinarius put forward an extreme version of the Word-flesh Christology. He delighted to speak of Christ as God incarnate (*theos ensarkos*) 'flesh-bearing God' (*theos sarkothoros*), or 'God born of a woman.' By such descriptions he did not mean that the flesh was, as it were, simply an outward covering which the Word had donned, but rather that it was joined in absolute oneness of being with the Godhead (*pros enoteta theo sunertai*) from the moment of its conception. 'The flesh,' he stated, 'is not something super-added to the Godhead

for well-doing, but constitutes one reality or nature (*sueouthiomene kai sumphutos*) with It.’ The Incarnate is, in effect, ‘a compound unity in human form’ (*sunthesis anthropoeidys*), and there is ‘one nature (*moan . . . fusin*) composed of impassible divinity and passible flesh.’ Apollinarius interprets the text I sanctify myself (John 17:19) as implying precisely this: it ‘reveals the indivisibility of a single living entity,’ i.e., the substantial oneness of the Word with His flesh (= ‘myself’). The reason for this was that, as he viewed the matter, the body of Christ could not by itself exist as an independent ‘nature;’ to exist as such it needed to be conjoined with, and animated by, the spirit. He brings out the full significance of his teaching in the statement, ‘The flesh, being dependent for its motions on some other principle of movement and action (whatever that principle may be), is not of itself a complete living entity, but in order to become one enters into fusion with something else. So it united itself with the heavenly governing principle (i.e., the Logos) and was fused with it . . . Thus out of the moved and the mover was compounded a single living entity—not two, nor one composed of two complete, self-moving principles.’”

Apollinarius’ logic flows out of his strong defense of “homoousia” (i.e., the anti Arian motion of equality between God the Father and Christ the Son) in these steps:

- a) It is impossible to make the divinity and the humanity combine in their entirety into one person. Two persons would be the necessary result, that two complete things should become one is impossible (This, he argues, would lead to a quaternity instead of a Trinity.).
- b) Thus, he argues from redemption truth that immutable divinity can be preserved only by yielding the integrity of his human nature. Christ is one person, not two. He wrote: “For God, having become incarnate, has in the human flesh simply his own energy, his mind being unsubject to sensual and carnal passions, and divinely and sinlessly guided the flesh and controlling the fleshly emotions, and not alone unconquerable by death, but also destroying death. And he is true God, the unfleshly appearing in the flesh, the perfect one in genuine and divine perfection, not two persons (*prosopa*), nor two

natures (*phuseis*). There is one Son; both before the incarnation and after the incarnation the same, man and God, each as one. And the divine Logos is not one person and the man Jesus another.”

- c) This allowed Apollinarius to speak of one harmonious being (one nature, one substance) and yet see or distinguish two natures. “For as man is one, but has in himself two different natures . . . so the Son, being one, has also two natures.”

Seeburg simply adds at this point (*Text-book of the History of Doctrines*. I, 246-47): “He could find no way to escape their solution of it (Antiochene Sabellianism) except at the tenible price of the surrender of the human (noud) of Christ. He substituted the human ‘flesh’ for the complete human being controlled by the Logos because he was little able to understand the divine-human nature.”

- N.B.** A note is in order here concerning the relationship of Athanasius to Apollinarius. Athanasius saw clearly the soteriological consequences of a denial of the true divinity of the son, but was unable to perceive that a Christology that denied the human integrity also endangered the doctrine of salvation. Athanasius, like Origen and Apollinarius, stressed the unity of Christ, interpreting the phrase “becoming flesh” to mean “dwelling in the flesh.” Grillmeier attests to Athanasius’ Apollinarianism with caution (*Christ and Christian Tradition*. I, 308): “In discovering the particular views which Athanasius held on the being of Christ we start from a number of plain facts. It is probably undeniable that in his picture of Christ the soul of Christ retreats well into the background, even if it does not disappear completely. Does this retreat imply that the human psyche is really missing from the Athanasian picture of Christ? We must distinguish two points of view here. It can probably be demonstrated quite easily that the soul of Christ plays no part in Athanasius’ explanation of the economy of salvation, and that it is not even a factor in the human life of Christ. These assertions may be made with reasonable assurance. But over and above them there is a further question to be asked. Did Athanasius, in fact,

know nothing of a human soul in Christ? Did he exclude it altogether? We can summarize briefly what is to follow by putting the last question in this way: did Athanasius advocate a merely verbal Logos-sarx framework or a real one? While the former framework would indeed ignore the soul of Christ it would in fact tacitly assume its presence. The latter, on the other hand, would regard the soul as non-existent. We shall now show quite simply and clearly that in the Athanasian picture of Christ the ‘soul’ of the Lord is no ‘theological factor.’”

Grillmeier stated that the soul of Christ was “no theological factor” for Athanasius, but at the same time he may not have denied its physical reality.

2. The refutation of Apollinarius. The Cappadocians were the first to recognize the hidden danger within his Christology, which, for all practical purposes, denied the reality of Christ’s human nature and the Christian doctrine of salvation. To Cledonius Gregory of Nazianus (329–89 A.D.) wrote (*Epistle*, 101): “If anyone has put his trust in Him as a Man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation. For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as a whole. Let them not, then begrudge us our complete salvation, or clothe the Savior only with bones and nerves and the portraiture of humanity. For if His Manhood is without soul, even the Arians admit this, that they may attribute His Passion to the Godhead, as that which gives motion to the body is also that which suffers. But if He has a soul, and yet is without a mind, how is He man, for man is not a mindless animal? And this would necessarily involve that while His form and tabernacle was human, His soul should be that of a horse or an ox, or some other of the brute creation. This, then, would be what He saves; and I have been deceived by the Truth, and led to boast of an honour which had been bestowed upon another. But if His Manhood is intellectual and not without mind, let them cease to be thus really mindless. But, says such an one, the Godhead took the place of the human intellect, which is the most essential part of man. Keep then the whole man, and mingle

Godhead therewith, that you may benefit me in my completeness. But, he asserts, He could not contain Two perfect Natures. Not if you only look at Him in a bodily fashion. For a bushel measure will not hold two bushels, nor will the space of one body hold two or more bodies. But if you will look at what is mental and incorporeal, remember that I in my one personality can contain soul and reason and mind and the Holy Spirit; and before me this world, by which I mean the system of things visible and invisible, contained Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

Gregory writing to Cledonius stated (*Epistle*, 102) that “they accuse us of introducing two natures, separate or conflicting, and of dividing the supernatural and wondrous Union.” Apollinarius, principally Vitalis, the schematical bishop of Antioch, taught one nature in Christ; Gregory two natures. Such to Apollinarius destroyed Christ’s oneness. Gregory stated (*Epistle*, 102): “And since a question has also been mooted concerning the Divine Assumption of humanity, or Incarnation, state this also clearly to all concerning me, that I join in One the Son, who was begotten of the Father, and afterward of the Virgin Mary, and that I do not call Him two Sons, but worship Him as One and the same in undivided Godhead and honour. But if anyone does not assent to this statement, either now or hereafter, he shall give account to God at the day of judgment.”

Again he wrote (*Epistle*, 102): “Thus, then, they interpret wrongly the words, but we have the Mind of Christ, and very absurdly, when they say that His Godhead is the mind of Christ, and not understanding the passage as we do, namely, that they who have purified their mind by the imitation of the mind which the Saviour took of us, and, as far as may be, have attained conformity with it, are said to have the mind of Christ; just as they might be testified to have the flesh of Christ who have trained their flesh, and in this respect have become of the same body and partakers of Christ; and so he says, ‘As we have borne the image of the earth we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.’ And so they declare that the Perfect Man is not He who was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin; but the mixture of God and Flesh. For what, say they, can be more perfect than this?

“They play the same trick with the word that describes the Incarnations, vs.: He was made Man, explain it to mean, not,

He was in the human nature with which He surrounded Himself, according to the Scripture, He knew what was in man; but teaching that it means, He consorted and conversed with men, and taking refuge in the expression which says that He was seen on Earth and conversed with Men. And what can anyone contend further? They who take away the Humanity and the Interior Image cleanse by their newly invented mask only our outside, and that which is seen; so far in conflict with themselves that at one time, for the sake of the flesh, they explain all the rest in a gross and carnal manner (for it is from hence that they have derived their second Judaism and their silly thousand years delight in paradise, and almost the idea that we shall resume again the same conditions after these same thousand years); and at another time they bring in His flesh as a phantom rather than a reality, as not having been subjected to any of our experiences, not even such as are free from sin; and use for this purpose the apostolic expression, understood and spoken in a sense which is not apostolic, that our Saviour was made in the likeness of Men and found in fashion as a Man, as though by these words was expressed, not the human form, but some delusive phantom and appearance.”

Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395 A.D.) has a remarkable work that touches on this subject, *Against Eunomius* which clearly suggests a rejection of Apollinarius (5.5). He postulates two distinct natures in one person (a “commixture”).

“And the Word was in the beginning with God, the man was subject to the trial of death; and neither was the Human Nature from everlasting, nor the Divine Nature mortal: and all the rest of the attributes are contemplated in the same way. It is not the Human Nature that raised Lazarus, nor is it the power that cannot suffer that weeps for him when he lies in the grave: the tear proceeds from the Man, the life from the true Life. It is not the Human Nature that feeds the thousands, nor is it omnipotent might that hastens to the fig tree. Who is it that is weary with the journey, and Who is it that by His word made all the world subsist? What is the brightness of the glory, and what is that that was pierced with the nails? What form is it that is buffeted in the Passion, and what form is it that is glorified from everlasting? So much as this is clear, (even if one does not

follow the argument into detail) that the blows belong to the servant in whom the Lord was, the honours to the Lord Whom the servant compassed about, so that by reason of contact and the union of Natures the proper attributes of each belong to both, as the Lord receives the stripes of the servant, while the servant is glorified with the honour of the Lord; for this is why the Cross is said to be the Cross of the Lord of glory, and why every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, the glory of God the Father.”

“But if we are to discuss the other points in the same way, let us consider what it is that dies, and what it is that destroys death; what it is that is renewed, and what it is that empties itself. The Godhead ‘empties’ Itself that It may come within the capacity of the Human Nature, and the Human Nature is renewed by the Divine. This is our doctrine, which does not, as Eunomius charges against it, preach a plurality of Christs, but the union of the Man with the Divinity, and which calls by the name of ‘making’ the transmutation of the Mortal to the Immortal, of the Servant to the Lord, of Sin to Righteousness, of the Curse to the Blessing, of the Man to Christ. What further have our slanderers left to say, to show that we preach ‘two Christs’ in our doctrine, if we refuse to say that He Who was in the beginning from the Father uncreatedly Lord, and Christ, and the Word, and God, was ‘made,’ and declare that the blessed Peter was pointing briefly and incidentally to the mystery of the Incarnation, according to the meaning now explained, that the Nature which was crucified through weakness has Itself also, as we have said, become, by the overwhelming power of Him Who dwells in It, that which the Indweller Himself is, in fact and in name, even Christ our Lord?”

N.B. Gregory of Nyssa is clear in his rejection of a one-nature Christ, but unclear as to the cohabitation of the two natures in Christ. He uses terms like “intermingle” or “commixture,” but does not stress the “without confusion” of the Chalcedonian Creed.

3. **The condemnation of Apollinarius.** From the decade of the 370s onward the Cappadocians assailed Apollinarius and Vitalis

with the result that Bishop Damasus of Rome condemned them in local councils in 374 A.D. and 376 A.D. The final condemnation of Apollinarius' views came at the second Ecumenical Council, Constantinople, 381 A.D. (Technically, this was not ecumenical because only Eastern bishops attended). The creed stated:

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all time (pro panton ton aionon), Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not created (poiethenta), of the same essence (reality) as the Father (homoousion to patri), through Whom all things came into being, Who for us men and because of our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became human (enanthropesanta). He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures, and ascended to heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge the living and dead. His Kingdom shall have no end (telos).”

Leith commented (*Creeds of the Churches*, 32): “From the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary’ has been traditionally regarded as a refutation of Apollinarianism. The Council did condemn Apollinarianism, and the clause does contain the material for the refutation of Apollinarianism.”

Summary

The purpose of this lesson has been to initiate the discussion of the person of our Lord. As in the discussion of theology proper, the Age of the Theologians was most fertile. The Fathers evidence little interpretative insights; the apologists began to grapple with the issue of His humanity/deity in the matrix of the threat of both Gnosticism and Docetism. In the era of the theologians, the incarnation of Christ was finally focused upon with intense study. Interestingly, truth emerges in conflict with error and is often expressed initially in what truth is not as opposed to what it is. Apollinarius' single nature of Christ, in which the humanity was degraded, was repulsed by the Cappadocians, but the truth by 381 was not formulated. This awaits Chalcedon (451) after two other errant attempts are exposed and rejected (i.e., Nestorianism, Eutychianism). These are subjects of the next lesson.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON
AND THE NATURES OF CHRIST

Party	Time	Reference	Human Nature	Divine Nature
Docetists	Late 1st Century	1 John 4:1-3	Denied	Affirmed
Ebionites	2nd Century	Irenaeus	Affirmed	Denied
Arians	4th Century	Condemned: Nicaea, 325	Affirmed	Reduced
Apollinarians	4th Century	Condemned: Cont. 381	Reduced	Affirmed
Nestorians	5th Century	Condemned: Ephesus, 431	Affirmed ¹	Affirmed
Eutychians	5th Century	Condemned: Chalcedon, 451 & III Const. 680	Reduced ²	Reduced
Orthodox	From beginning	Defined: Chalcedon, 451	Affirmed ³	Affirmed

¹Nestorians held that Christ was two persons.

²Eutychians held that Christ had one mixed nature, neither fully human nor fully divine.

³Orthodox view: Christ is one person with a fully divine nature and a fully human nature.

Christ is one person, *prosopon*, *hypostasis*
His natures are
without mixture, *asynchutos*

without change, *atreptos*
without division, *adiaretos*
without separation, *achoristos*

Taken from: Buswell, J. O. A *Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, II,
pp. 46-47