

# The Son

14. Incarnation

15. The Cross

16. Resurrection

17. Christology

- Incarnation “in flesh”
  - “The readiness of God to subject himself to the conditions of mortal life, to take suffering and evil upon himself to the point of the cross makes belief in him much easier than any other argument ... over against law, religion or ritual, the Incarnation has become the permanent channel of man’s relationship with God (Hebblethwaite)”
  - Eastern Orthodox Christians make the Incarnation central to their theology (Benedict Seraphim):
    - “For the Orthodox, the central doctrine which unites and brings coherence to everything in Orthodoxy--dogmas (such as the Trinity), worship (such as the Sacraments), and prayer (such as theosis, or the doctrine about our becoming partakers of the divine nature as in 2 Peter 1:3-4)--is that God became flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ.
    - “To hear some Christians talk, it's almost as though there's no need for the Resurrection because salvation was accomplished on the Cross. Not for Orthodox. The entirety of Christ's Incarnation from conception by the Holy Spirit to Ascension into heaven is a part of how we are saved, for we are not saved merely by being moved from one forensic column in God's ledger book to the other: from guilty to innocent. We are not saved merely by the removal of personal guilt for our personal sins. We are saved body, soul and spirit (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

# The Person and Work of Christ

- “The Reformer’s focus was very much on what Christ came to *do* ..his obedience as the last Adam, culminating in his substitutionary death. The incarnation was thus necessary if the Son of God was to live and die in the place of sinful human beings. In the Eastern tradition, ..prominence [is] given to what Christ came to *be*. Indeed, it is often said that the incarnation would still be necessary even if man had never fallen into sin...For them, Christ reconciled God and man chiefly by becoming man; by incorporation into Christ, therefore, there is opened up to believers the prospect of union with God or *theosis*... Adam’s sin brought death into the world, and death is what causes us to sin. What we have inherited is not sinfulness but mortality. It is thus death, even more than sin, which Christ came to defeat.. The Orthodox..[see] Christ’s resurrection..as guaranteeing the resurrection of believers at his Second Coming but also as conferring resurrection life upon them here and now...Baptism is seen as the beginning of the process of inner transformation..[that] involves freedom from spiritual slavery, forgiveness of sins, illumination of the soul, spiritual regeneration, renewal in the image of God and adoption as a child of God...To that end, the individual is responsible to put off the old man and put on the new, and to preserve the gift of the Spirit committed to him/her. A balance is thus maintained between divine agency and human responsibility.” (ACUTE)

# How did Christ become human?

- **Kenosis** is a Greek word for emptiness, which is used as a theological term. The ancient Greek word κένωσις kénōsis means an "emptying", from κενός kenós "empty". The word is mainly used, however, in a Christian theological context, for example Philippians 2:7, "Jesus made himself nothing (ἐκένωσε ekénōse) ..." (NIV) or "...he emptied himself..." (NRSV).
  - “An apparent dilemma arises when Christian theology posits a God outside of time and space, who enters into time and space to become human (Incarnate). The doctrine of Kenosis attempts to explain what the Son of God chose to give up in terms of his divine attributes, in order to assume human nature. Since the incarnate Jesus is simultaneously fully human and fully divine, Kenosis holds that these changes were temporarily assumed by God in his incarnation, and that when Jesus ascended back into heaven following the resurrection, he fully reassumed all of his original attributes and divinity.
  - “Specifically it refers to attributes of God that are thought to be incompatible with becoming fully human. For example, God's omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience as well as his aseity [[the characteristic of being un-derived](#)], eternity, infinity, impassibility and immutability. Theologians who support this doctrine often appeal to a reading of Philippians 2:5-8. Critics of Kenosis theology argue that the context of Philippians 2:5-8 is referring to Jesus voluntarily taking the form of a servant to conceal his divine glory (revealed temporarily in the Transfiguration), or to forsaking his place and position in heaven to dwell among men, as opposed to forsaking his divine attributes or nature

# Imitation of Christ

- **Luther's Ethical Vision** (study guide on Luther from Kansas U)
  - The essence of Christian morality is the **imitation** of Christ, not in the medieval sense of doing just what Christ did but rather in behaving after the pattern of Christ, who, being rich, for our sakes became poor; who, being on an equality with God, for us took the form of a servant and a felon; being innocent, yet on our behalf he assumed a guilt which was not his own. Even so must the Christian become a Christ to his neighbor, so identifying himself with the neighbor as even to assume guilt for which there is no personal responsibility. This ideal also can never be adequately attained. The Christian is bound every day to fail, yet he is not sunk. He is at once a sinner and yet saved. If he makes no pretense to goodness but in humility and gratitude endeavors to **conform** himself to the divine purpose, he will be able to carry on despite every shortcoming.“
- **What is that to me?**
  - “Imitating Jesus Christ and being conformed into his likeness challenges me to the core of my being: can I, as an imitator of Christ, invite others to imitate me just as Apostle Paul did?”

## The Cross

“The theology of the Cross says the “God is known in the Cross of Christ and experienced through suffering” (Moltmann)

- According to Luther, the theologian of the cross preaches what seems foolish to the world (1 Cor. 1:18). In particular, the theologian of the cross preaches that (1) humans can in no way earn righteousness, (2) humans cannot add to or increase the righteousness of the cross, and (3) any righteousness given to humanity comes from outside of us (*extra nos*).
- In contrast, in Luther's view, the theologian of glory preaches that (1) humans have the ability to do the good that lies within them (*quod in se est*), (2) there remains, after the fall, some ability to choose the good, and (3) humans cannot be saved without participating in or cooperating with the righteousness given by God.
- As Luther understood it, these two theologies had two radically different starting points: they had different epistemologies, or ways of understanding how people know about God and the world. For the theologian of glory, reason and personal perceptions should be employed to increase knowledge about God and the world. Thus, because an action appears to be good, it must be good. For the theologian of the cross, it is only from the self-revelation of God that people can learn about God and their relation to God—and the most perfect self-revelation of God is God's Word become flesh, Jesus the Christ. Thus, even if an action appears good, still Christ died on the cross for human sins and sinfulness, so the action is not as good as it appears.
- The "theologians of glory," therefore, are those who build their theology in the light of what they expect God to be like—and, surprise, surprise, they make God to look something like themselves. The "theologians of the cross," however, are those who build their theology in the light of God's own revelation of himself in Christ hanging on the cross.

### What is that to me?

- “The Cross of Jesus Christ amazes me; in powerlessness I find strength; in ignominy, glory; in suffering, joy. Power is self-denial, glory is vulnerability, greatness is servanthood, joy is sacrifice. ..Whenever words like *success, achievement, acclaim* enter my mind, the Cross deletes them.

## **What is redemption?** (apolutrosis, meaning “buying back” – deliverance from Egypt and Babylon)

- NT writers seized upon the “redemption” simile to express what Christ had done for mankind. When the metaphor is pressed into literal details, e.g. to whom was the ransom paid, etc. difficulties arise. Many early church fathers viewed the ransom as paid to Satan.
- The Recapitulation Theory: Originated with Irenaeus (125-202 AD). He sees Christ as the new Adam, who systematically undoes what Adam did. Thus, where Adam was disobedient concerning God's edict concerning the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Christ was obedient even to death on the wood of a tree. Irenaeus is the first to draw comparisons between Eve and Mary, contrasting the faithlessness of the former with the faithfulness of the latter. In addition to reversing the wrongs done by Adam, Irenaeus thinks of Christ as "recapitulating" or "summing up" human life.
- The Satisfaction (or Commercial) Theory: The formulator of this theory was the medieval theologian Anselm of Canterbury (1034-1109), in his book, *Cur Deus Homo* (lit. Why the God Man). In his view, God's offended honor and dignity could only be satisfied by the sacrifice of the God-man, Jesus Christ. "Anselm offered compelling biblical evidence that the atonement was not a ransom paid by God to the devil but rather a debt paid to God on behalf of sinners." Anselm's work established a foundation for the Protestant Reformation, specifically the understanding of justification by faith.
- The Penal-Substitution Theory: This view was formulated by the 16th century Reformers as an extension of Anselm's Satisfaction theory. Anselm's theory was correct in introducing the satisfaction aspect of Christ's work and its necessity, however the Reformers saw it as insufficient because it was referenced to God's honor rather than his justice and holiness and was couched more in terms of a commercial transaction than a penal substitution. This Reformed view says simply that Christ died for man, in man's place, taking his sins and bearing them for him. The bearing of man's sins takes the punishment for them and sets the believer free from the penal demands of the law: The righteousness of the law and the holiness of God are satisfied by this substitution.

# What is the atonement?

- “condition of being at-one, used to express harmony or reconciliation after two parties had been estranged from one another. Soon a secondary meaning emerged: atonement denoted the means, such as an act or a payment, through which harmony was restored.
- **The Moral-Example Theory (or Moral-Influence Theory):** Christ died to influence mankind toward moral improvement. This theory denies that Christ died to satisfy any principle of divine justice, but teaches instead that His death was designed to greatly impress mankind with a sense of God's love, resulting in softening their hearts and leading them to repentance. Thus, the Atonement is not directed towards God with the purpose of maintaining His justice, but towards man with the purpose of persuading him to right action. Formulated by Peter Abelard (1079-1142) partially in reaction against Anselm's *Satisfaction theory*, this view was held by the 16th century Socinians. Versions of it can be found later in F. D. E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Horace Bushnell (1802-1876).
- **The Governmental Theory:** God made Christ an example of suffering to exhibit to erring man that sin is displeasing to him. God's moral government of the world made it necessary for him to evince his wrath against sin in Christ. Christ died as a token of God's displeasure toward sin and it was accepted by God as sufficient; but actually God does not exact strict justice. This view was formulated by Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) and is subsequently found in Arminianism, Charles Finney, the New England Theology of Jonathan Edwards (the younger), and Methodism.

# Resurrection

- from anastasis, “to stand again.”
  - “Jesus’ resurrection is a central theme in the NT, for it overcame all obstacles to our being what God intended to the divine creation to be...The historic church believes in the resurrection because Jesus did...Secondly, resurrection is rooted in the very nature of God.
  - **What is the resurrected body like (resurrection is never reduced to a question of the soul)?** “by the twelfth century...Pauline language about what was sown in corruption being raised incorruptible is generally understood to mean that the material bits of this body are replaced and rendered incorruptible in the resurrected body. Eucharistic theology provides part of the support for this position: the body of Christ begins to change its consumer into Christ’s being. That is, the dominant mode of thought has been in terms of material continuity and reassembly.
  - [continuing an analysis I Cor 15:53-54] Guthrie observes that *“there is no escaping the conclusion that Paul is arguing for some kind of glorious body which bears a direct relationship with the present body of the flesh.”* Harris not only sees a perpetuating bond between the two types of bodies but also believes that each individual believer's personality will be preserved, albeit transformed by the Spirit at the resurrection. Those in Christ are to be clothed with imperishability and immortality, the clothing of resurrection body. This newly composed body is invisible to the natural human eye but is visible to other spiritual bodies. In observation of the word 'immortality' Moffatt notes that it was commonly used by Hellenistic Jews like Philo, and the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon and literally meant 'incorruption' and gave the idea of *“eternal duration or indestructible existence... In place of a natural earthly body that is always characterised by corruption, erosion, and weakness, the resurrected believer will have a spiritual heavenly body that is resplendent in form and appearance, and will possess limitless energy and perfect health.”* (<http://www.spotlightministries.org.uk/resbod.htm> )

# Christology

- Christology (from Christ and Greek -λογία, -logia) is a field of study within Christian theology which is concerned with the nature of Jesus Christ, particularly with how the divine and human are related in his person. Christology is generally less concerned with the details of Jesus' life than with how the human and divine co-exist in one person. Although this study of the inter-relationship of these two natures is the foundation of Christology, some essential sub-topics within the field of Christology include:
  - the Incarnation,
  - the Resurrection,
  - and the salvific work of Jesus (known as soteriology).
- Christology is related to questions concerning the nature of God like Trinitarianism, Unitarianism or Binitarianism. However, from a Christian perspective, these questions are concerned with how the divine persons relate to one another, whereas Christology is concerned with the meeting of the human (Son of Man) and divine (God the Son or Word of God) in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. (Wikipedia)
- “The Council of Nicaea, against Arius, affirmed that Jesus Christ was truly divine. The Council of Constantinople, against Apollinarius, affirmed that Jesus Christ was truly human. The Council of Ephesus, against Nestorius, affirmed that Jesus Christ was one integrated person. The Council of Chalcedon, against Eutyches, affirmed that Jesus Christ had two natures, divine and human.
  - “Having said that Jesus Christ is divine and human, one person with two natures, does not mean that we fully understand our Savior. The person of Christ remains a mystery. We cannot fully understand Jesus Christ because he is unique. We have no adequate analogy with which to compare him. (Jack Rodgers)

# Christocentrism

- “Christocentric is a doctrinal term within Christianity, describing theological positions that focus more heavily on Jesus Christ, the second person of the Christian Trinity, as opposed to the Godhead / God "the Father" (theocentric) or the Holy Spirit (pneumocentric). Christocentric theologies make Christ the central theme about which all other theological positions/doctrines are oriented.
  - “Certain theological traditions within the Christian Church can be described as more heavily Christocentric. Notably, the teachings of Augustine of Hippo and Paul of Tarsus, which have been very influential in the West, place a great emphasis on the person of Jesus in the process of salvation.
  - “For instance, in Reformation theology, the Lutheran tradition is seen as more theologically Christocentric, as it places its doctrine of justification by grace, which is primarily a Christological doctrine, at the center of its thought. Meanwhile, the Calvinist/Reformed tradition is seen as more theologically theocentric, as it places its doctrine of the sovereignty of God ("the Father") at the center.
- “all human art is drawn magnetically to that point where the finite world in all its helpless tragedy is transparent to the beauty and glory of God. These pairs—intelligibility and beauty, understanding and love—unite in the vision of the central revealed image of Jesus. **Christo-centrism**, then, is the logical outworking in history and art of Paul’s declaration, ‘For me to live is Christ.’ (Corwin summarizing *A Theological Aesthetics*)

- Corwin attempts to blend aesthetics and Christo-centrism, not Christocentrism, which is focused on a different theological concern. He is “living as Christ” or emphasizing the religious experience of “one-ness”. This is the theme of a recent book: *God after Metaphysics, A Theological Aesthetic*
  - While philosophy believes it is impossible to have an experience of God without the senses, theology claims that such an experience is possible, though potentially idolatrous. In this engagingly creative book, John Panteleimon Manoussakis ends the impasse by proposing an aesthetic allowing for a sensuous experience of God that is not subordinated to imposed categories or concepts. Manoussakis draws upon the theological traditions of the Eastern Church, including patristic and liturgical resources, to build a theological aesthetic founded on the inverted gaze of icons, the augmented language of hymns, and the reciprocity of touch. Manoussakis explores how a relational interpretation of being develops a fuller and more meaningful view of the phenomenology of religious experience beyond metaphysics and onto-theology.

- Theologically, Christocentrism can sometimes (though certainly not always) point to an unhealthy emphasis of God as immanent over God as transcendent. Christ is the immanent member of the Trinity--the one who discloses God, mediates between God and man, and makes us partakers of the divine nature. But there is also a great and terrible and awful God, made known most vividly in the pre-Christian era, that must not be forgotten.
- Soteriologically, Christocentrism or Crucicentrism can sometimes (though certainly not always) point to an unhealthy emphasis of redemption as the centerpiece of God's plan for the universe. While redemption certainly plays a significant role in God's plan for the universe, it is not all that God is doing.
- Anthropologically, and related to the preceding, Christocentrism can sometimes (though certainly not always) point to a latent anthropocentrism. That is, it can at times focus on what God is doing for me and for my fellow man in all of his immanence and redemptive energy to the exclusion of what God is and does irrespective of his creatures.
- Hermeneutically, Christocentrism can sometimes (though certainly not always) point to a faulty hermeneutic. Frankly speaking, the Old Testament is not about Christ. It is about God's people being rightly related to their holy God. Certainly, we find anticipation in the Old Testament period about something greater, but it is a great anachronistic leap to move from this latent anticipation to the conclusion that the Old Testament is about Christ.

(<http://systematicsmatters.blogspot.com/2009/11/are-we-theocentric-christocentric.html> )