

**THE PERSON OF CHRIST**  
**Part III: The Medieval and Reformation Church**

Summary:

- I. INTRODUCTION.**
- II. THE PERSON OF CHRIST AND THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH.**
  - A. In the East.
  - B. In the West.
- III. THE PERSON OF CHRIST AND THE REFORMATION CHURCH.**
  - A. In the Roman Catholic Tradition.
  - B. In the Protestant Tradition.
  - C. In the Non-Protestant Tradition.
- IV. CONCLUSION.**

**I. INTRODUCTION.**

**The Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.)**, which formulated the Orthodox statement on our Lord's incarnate person, did not bring to a conclusion arduous debate on Christology. Seeburg informs us (*History*. I, 273): "But peace was by no means restored. On the contrary, the history of the ensuing years is marked through its course by the records of wild excitement and horrible deeds of religious fanaticism." While the doctrine was not advanced, it was strongly, even violently, controverted. The purpose of this lesson is to survey the doctrine of Christ's incarnate being through the Medieval and Reformation eras.

**II. THE PERSON OF CHRIST AND THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH.**

The Medieval Era witnessed two major controversies over Christology (Monophysitism and Monothelitism) and lesser conflicts such as a revival of Adoptionism. For convenience, we shall discuss Christology in the era by dividing the church into the East and West (the actual division occurred in A.D. 1054).

**A. In the East.**

1. **Monophysitism**, wrote Orr (*Progress*, 194), "is simply in principle a continuation of the Eutychian" controversy. Indeed he further wrote that the Chalcedonian creed proved to be "the signal for a general revolt of the adherents of the 'one nature' doctrine." Harnack wrote (*History*. IV, 226):

“The severest condemnation of the Chalcedonian Creed as decree wrung from the Eastern Churches, is to be found in the history of the next 68 years. These years are not only marked by the most frightful revolts on the part of the populace and the monks, particularly in Egypt, Palestine, and a part of Syria, but also by the attempts of the Emperors to get rid of the decree which had been issued with a definite end in view, and which was a source of difficulty and threatened the security of the Empire.”

The West, following Tertullian, Augustine, and Leo, raised no issue against Chalcedon; its was wholly in the East.

- a) **The nature of Monophysitism.** Most of those who were disturbed by the Chalcedonian definition of Christology were really opposed, not to the doctrine the Council asserted, but to the words “in two natures.” As the East had done in the Trinitarian struggles, it equated the terms “nature” and “person”. The Monophysites affirmed the truth of Chalcedon in rejecting both Nestorianism and Eutychianism, but reacted to “two natures” as implying “two persons.” These are verbal or functional Monophysites, not ontological Monophysites! Severus of Antioch categorically affirmed perfect deity and humanity, but insisted on a single nature. He stated (quoted in Gonzalez, *History*, I, 75-76): “He who was eternally consubstantial to him who begat him is the one who voluntarily descended and became consubstantial to this mother. Thus, he became man, being God; he made himself that which he was not, while at the same time remaining that which he was, without any change. For he did not lose his divinity in his incarnation, and the body did not lose the tangible character of its nature.”

**N.B.** The Monophysites were also known as **Theopaschites** because it was believed that they taught that “God suffered” on the cross.

- b) **The history of Monophysitism.** The first recognition of the verbal Monophysites came in A.D. 476 when Basiliscus usurped the imperial throne and reversed the findings of Chalcedon.
- (1) Zeno was restored to the throne and attempted to work out a compromise between the Chalcedonians and verbal Monophysites. This ended in failure and a break in relations between the East and Rome. Felix of Rome (A.D. 484–519) claimed political infringement, thus a split resulted.

- (2) Emperor Justin secured unity once more and conciliated with Hormisdas of Rome by confirming Leo's Tome and Chalcedon.
- (3) This union in reality split the Monophysites into two parties: *Verbal Monophysites* (Severians) and Real Monophysites. Under the lead of Julian of Halicarnassus, the *Real Monophysites* adopted a pure Eutychianism.
- (4) After Justin's death, Justinian became emperor with a dream to rebuild the unity that the empire had lost. For this reason he sought a solution to the Christological issues that rent it. In this regard Justinian called for the **Fifth Ecumenical Council** to meet in **Constantinople in 533 A.D.** The hope was to bring peace by consoling the Verbal Monophysites and dealing with the Real Monophysites. Justinian felt that the way to condemn the Monophysites was to condemn the teachers of Antiochene Theology (Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, Ibas of Edessa, and Origen). The council stated: "We condemn and anathematize with all other heretics who have been condemned and anathematized by the before-mentioned four holy synods, and by the Catholic and Apostolic Church, Theodore, who was bishop of Mopsuestia, and his impious writings, and also those things which Theodoret impiously wrote against the right faith and against the twelve capitula of the holy Cyril, and against the first synod of Ephesus, and also those which he wrote in defense of Theodore and Nestorius. In addition to these, we also anathematize the impious epistle which Ibas is said to have written to Maris the Persian, which denies that God the Word was incarnate of the holy *Theotokos* and ever-virgin Mary, and accuses Cyril, of holy memory, who taught the truth, of being a heretic and of the same sentiments with Apollinarius, and blames the first synod of Ephesus for deposing Nestorius without examination and inquiry, and calls the twelve capitula of Cyril impious and contrary to the right faith, and defends Theodore and Nestorius, and their impious dogmas and writings. We, therefore, anathematize the three chapters before mentioned, that is the impious **Theodore of Mopsuestia** with his execrable writings, and those things which Theodoret impiously wrote, and the impious letter which is said to be by Ibas, together with their defenders and those who have written or do write in defense of them, or who dare to say that they

are correct, and who have defended or do attempt to defend their impiety with the names of the holy Fathers or of the holy Council of Chalcedon.”

And further: “If any one does not anathematize Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinarius, Nestorius, Eutyches, and Origen, with their impious writings, as also all other heretics already condemned and anathematized by the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and by the aforesaid four holy synods, and all those who have been or are of the same mind with the heretics mentioned, and who remain to the end in their impiety, let him be anathema.”

Orr summarized the council thusly (*Progress*, 197): “Thus for a whole century the controversy went on till, finally, in 553 A.D. a new Council was summoned by Justinian—the so-called fifth ecumenical—at Constantinople, to judge upon it. This fifth Council was attended only by 165 bishops, all but five of them Eastern, and its decrees were so far a victory for the Monophysites that they endorsed the anathemas of ‘The Three Chapters,’ and so secured at length the end dear to Cyril’s heart of the condemnation of the person and writings of Theodore, and, in part, the condemnation of Theodoret. But it saved the authority of the Council of Chalcedon by anathematizing those who declared that it countenanced the errors condemned. The persons of Theodoret and Ibas were spared on the ground that they had recalled their erroneous doctrine, and had been received by the Council of Chalcedon. The Council failed, however, in reconciling the Monophysites; rather it sealed their final separation from the Church of the Empire.”

- (5) The Real Monophysites (Eutychians) as well as many verbal Monophysites passed into permanent schism as a result of the council and have survived the centuries—Jacobites in Syria, the Copts in Egypt and Ethiopia, and the Armenians.
2. Monothelitism was a second attempt to alter the findings of Chalcedon; this in the seventh century (633–80 A.D.).
    - a) The nature of the movement is set within a political framework as Emperor Heraclius, militarily pressed by Persians and Saracens, sought to reconcile the Monophysites (verbal). Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople sought, as a means of rapprochement, the formula “one energy” with “two natures.” The bishop of Alexandria reconciled Severians with the formula, “a single hypostatic

energy.” As opposition from Chalcedonians mounted, Sergius proposed Monothelitism a single will in Christ. Sergius secured the approval of Honorius of Rome of “one will in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- b) The history of the movement is cast within the political vale of an attempt to secure Monophysite military aid.
  - (1) In 638 A.D. by imperial edit, the “Exposition of the Faith,” the term “energy” was replaced in the discussion by an affirmation of “one will” in Christ. Orr wrote (*Progress*, 200): “This, it is evident, was simply carrying back Monophysitism into the region of the will, while granting in words the distinctness of the natures, and it necessarily revived in an acuter form all the old controversies. The decree was endorsed, of course, in Constantinople, but was stoutly resisted and condemned in North Africa and in Italy, where the successors of Honorius refused it their assent. Thus the matter stood till 648 A.D., when a new Emperor, Constants II, substituted for the Ecthesis another edict called the Type, which went on the futile idea of forbidding discussion altogether, ordaining that neither one will nor two wills should be taught. Severe punishments were decreed against all who should disobey. Pope Martin resisted and had Monothelitism condemned at Rome in 649 A.D. For this offence he was taken, a few years after, in chains to Constantinople, and finally was banished to the Crimea where he died literally of hunger. Another leading opponent, the aged Maximus (82 years old) had his tongue cut out, his right hand cut off (622 A.D.), and died shortly after from the effects of this cruelty.”
  - (2) The political situation changed radically during the reign of Constants II when the Arabs conquered the areas of Syria and Egypt where Monophysites were in concentration. Measures to conciliate Monophysites were then unnecessary as the emperors began once again to affirm Chalcedonian Christology.
  - (3) The final blow to “Monothelitism” came in the year 681 A.D. at the Sixth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople. The Monothelites were condemned including Patriarch Sergius and Honorius of Rome.

**N.B.** Honorius was also condemned at the seventh and

eighth councils. Every pope until the eleventh century was required to pronounce an anathema on Honorius, an interesting event in the light of papal infallibility in 1870.

The council decreed two wills in Christ, one pertaining to each of His natures. The council stated (*Post-Nicene Fathers*. "Extracts," 14.3422): "Following the five holy and ecumenical synods and the most holy and approved Fathers, with one voice defining that our Lord Jesus Christ must be confessed to be our very God, one of the holy and consubstantial and life-giving Trinity, perfect in deity and the same perfect in humanity, truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with His Father as to His godhead, and consubstantial with us as to His manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin [Heb. 4:15]; begotten of His Father before the ages according to His godhead, but in these last days for us men and for our salvation begotten of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary, strictly and in truth Theotokos, according to the flesh; one and the Christ, Son, Lord, Only begotten, in two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, inseparably, (indivisibly to be recognized); the peculiarities of neither nature lost by the union, but rather the properties of each nature preserved, concurring in one person, and in one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same only begotten Son, the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, according as the prophets of old have taught, and as Jesus Christ Himself hath taught, and the creed of the holy Fathers hath delivered to us; we likewise and two natural operations indivisibly, unchangeably, inseparably, unconfusedly, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers. And these two natural wills are not contrary one to the other (which God forbid), as the impious heretics say, but His human will follows, not as resisting or reluctant, but rather therefore as subject to His divine and omnipotent will. For it was right that the will of the flesh should be moved, but be subject to the divine will, according to the most wise Athanasius. For as His flesh is called and is the flesh of God the Word, so also the natural will of His flesh is called and is the proper will of God the Word, as He Himself says: 'I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent Me,' [John 6:38], wherein he calls His own will the will of the flesh, inasmuch as His flesh was also His own. For as His most

holy and immaculately animated flesh was not destroyed because it was deified, but continued in its own state and nature, so also His human will, although deified, was not taken away, but rather was preserved according to the saying of Gregory the theologian. 'His will, namely that of the Savior, is not contrary to God, but altogether deified.'"

And again in the anathema section: "The holy council said: After we had reconsidered, according to our promise made to your highness, the doctrinal letter written by Sergius, at one time patriarch of this royal God-preserved city, to Cyrus, who was then bishop of Phasis, and to Honorius, sometime Pope of Old Rome, as well as the letter of the latter to the same Sergius, and finding that the documents are quite foreign to the apostolic dogmas, to the definitions of the holy councils, and to all the approved Fathers, and that they follow the false teachings of the heretics, we entirely reject them, and execrate them as hurtful to the soul. But the names of those men whom we execrate must also be thrust forth from the holy Church of God, namely, that of Sergius, sometime bishop of this God-preserved royal city, who was the first to write on this impious doctrine; also that of Cyrus of Alexandria, of Pyrrhus, Paul, and Peter, who died bishops of this God-preserved city, and were like-minded with them; and that of Theodore, sometime bishop of Pharan, all of whom the most holy and thrice-blessed Agatho, Pope of Old Rome, in his suggestion to our most pious and God-preserved lord and might Emperor, rejected because they were minded contrary to our orthodox faith, all of whom we declare are subject to anathema. And with these we decree that there shall be expelled from the holy Church of God and anathematized Honorius who was Pope of Old Rome, because of what we found written by him to Sergius, that in all respects he followed his view and confirmed his impious doctrine."

**B. In the West.**

The only major eruption of a Christological controversy in the west (by major I mean occasioning a movement) was the Adoptionistic Controversy of the eighth century in the context of both Carolingian Revival and Arab expulsion from Europe.

**N.B.** Because of the title "Adoptionistic," it would be natural to think of second or third century Dynamic Monarchianism (the Samaritans), but divorce

that from your mind. The term refers actually to a semi-Nestorianism. The issue is not the preincarnate, but the incarnate Christ.

1. In the context of refuting Sabellianism (patripassionism) two Spanish theologians, Elipandus of Toledo and Felix of Urgel, views were conceived to be Nestorian, Klotsch wrote (*History*, 122): “The Adoptionists did not mean to teach a dual personality since, from the time of his conception, the Son of man was taken up into the unity of the person of the Son of God. But the affirmation that Christ, as to his human nature, was only nominally, not really, God, and that he suffered only as the adopted man, implied two distinct persons in Christ.”

Although they asserted that Christ was really and truly the son of God, even according to his human nature, as distinguished from a human person, they nevertheless allowed his humanity to fall into the backyard as compared with his divinity (a quasi-Apollinarianism) so that in reality they presented an altogether divine person, who had assumed human substance and nature.

2. After the death of Elipandus and Felix the issue was not continued. Charlemagne condemned it at provincial synods (Regensburg, 792; Frankfurt, 794; and Aachen, 799) as did Hadrian I and Leo III, bishops of Rome.

**PARENTHESIS:** The Christology of the Latter Middle Ages, the Scholastic Period, evidenced only individual aberrations from Chalcedon as the scholars attempted to explain the faith through reason. A few examples are before us.

- (1) **Abelard (1079–1142)** comes perilously close to the charge of Nestorianism by placing the union of divine and human in the sphere of will more than person, maintaining two separated wills.
- (2) **Lombard (1100–60)** appears affiliated in belief with Abelard since the Logos only “apparently” assumed human nature. Both of these scholastics were condemned for rationalism and Nestorian adoptionism.
- (3) Seeberg summarized the scholastic is confusion within the context of maintaining the traditional creedal statements when he wrote (*History*, 109-110): “The Christological discussions of the twelfth century were not renewed in the thirteenth. The great Scholastics present in their Christology merely a reproduction of the traditional dogma, in which we note however the failure to emphasize the contemplation of the man Jesus which inspired the devotional ardor of the *Imitatio Christi*. The fundamental ideas are as follows:



The Logos-person, or the divine nature, takes the impersonal human nature into unity with itself. There is not thus originated one nature, but the union is consummated in the person. ‘The divine nature . . . united to itself human nature, although not to its very self, but in one person.’ ‘The union was made in the person, not in the nature’. It is the entire human nature which is here involved. But the result is, after all, not a real combination of the two natures. The union . . . is a certain relation which may be considered between the divine nature and the human, according to which they meet in the one person of the Son of God. The union is real, not in the divine, but only in the human nature. Accordingly, the incarnation is to be understood only relatively: ‘But God became man in this, that human nature began to be in the supposition of the divine nature, which preexisted from eternity’. It is the inherited defect of this Christology, that while divinity and humanity are placed in opposition abstractly, as infinite and finite, the Christ of the Gospels is only depicted in empty words. This drift is clearly seen in the discussion by Thomas of the questions, whether there is only one being in Christ. He concluded that, as there is no hypostatic being in the human nature of Christ, the question is to be answered in the affirmative.”

### III. THE PERSON OF CHRIST AND THE REFORMATION CHURCH.

#### A. In the Roman Catholic Tradition.

As stated previously, the issues of the Reformation were relative to Soteriology, not Theology Proper or Christology. The Romish Church agreed with their polarized opponents as to the pre-incarnate and incarnate Christ. Accordingly, recent Catholic creeds do not even broach the issue. The “Canons and Decrees of Trent,” as well as the Tridentine Profession of Faith, is silent; that is they accept the Ecumenical Councils. The Dogmatic Decrees of Vatican in 1870 are again silent as are the Documents of Vatican II in 1963–65.

#### B. In the Protestant Tradition.

1. **Martin Luther (1483–1546)** had no difficulty accepting the traditional creeds of the church concerning Christology, though he uniquely placed a heavy emphasis on “Johannine characteristics” (humanity). Luther at times appears to comingle the two natures. Althaus wrote (*The Theology of Martin Luther*, 194): “As we have already pointed out, Luther adopts the traditional dogmatic doctrine of the two natures. In agreement with it he teaches the full unity of the deity and the humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, the full participation of the humanity in the person of Jesus

Christ, the full participation of the humanity in the deity and of the deity in the humanity. 'God has suffered; a man created heaven and earth; a man died; God who is from all eternity died; the boy who nurses at the breast of the Virgin Mary is the creator of all things.' Luther teaches the impersonality of the human nature of Christ".... "How is it possible for Luther to maintain the true humanity of Christ under these circumstances? He teaches that Jesus Christ, according to his human nature, also possessed the attributes of the divine majesty, that is, that even the child Jesus was omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent."

Althaus is led to conclude (*Theology*, 198): "Luther's basic Christological confession will always be significant. However, his dogmatic theory which describes Christ as true God and true man is not unified within itself but displays contradictions. Theology had to be beyond it."

The Augsburg Confession states traditional orthodoxy (Article III). "Also they teach that the Word, that is, the son of God, took unto him man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably joined together in unity of person; one Christ, true God and true man: who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, died, and buried, that he might reconcile the Father unto us, and might be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men."

2. **John Calvin (1509–64)** deals at considerable length in Book II of the *Institutes* with the incarnate person of Christ; of particular interest is chapter 14, "How the two natures constitute the Person of the Mediator." Calvin stated (2. 14, 1): "When it is said that the Word was made flesh, we must not understand it as if he were either changed into flesh, or confusedly intermingled with flesh, but that he made choice of the Virgin's womb as a temple in which he might dwell. He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For we maintain, that the divinity was so conjoined and united with the humanity, that the entire properties of each nature remain entire, and yet the two natures constitute only one Christ. If, in human affairs, anything analogous to this great mystery can be found, the most opposite similitude seems to be that of man, who obviously consists of two substances, neither of which, however, is so intermingled with the other as that both do not retain their own properties. For neither is soul body, nor is body soul. Wherefore that is said separately of the soul which cannot in any way apply to the body; and that, on the other hand, of the body which is altogether inapplicable to the soul; and that, again, of the whole man, which cannot be affirmed without absurdity either of the body or of the soul separately."

Calvin speaks also to the issue of Nestorius and Eutyches (3.15, 4): “But there is nothing which furious and frantic spirits cannot throw into confusion. They fasten on the attributes of humanity to destroy his divinity; and, on the other hand, on those of his divinity to destroy his humanity: while those which, spoken conjointly of the two natures, apply to neither, they employ to destroy both. But what else is this than to contend that Christ is not man because he is God, not God because he is man, and neither God nor man because he is both at once. Christ, therefore, as God and man, possessing natures which are united but not confused, we conclude that he is our Lord and the true Son of God, even according to his humanity, though not by means of his humanity. For we must put far from us the heresy of Nestorius, who, presuming to dissect rather than distinguish between the two natures, devised a double Christ. But we see the Scripture loudly protesting against this, when the name of the Son of God is given to him who is born of a Virgin and the Virgin herself is called the mother of our Lord (Luke 1:32, 43). We must beware also of the insane fancy of Eutyches, lest, when we would demonstrate the unity of person, we destroy the two natures. The many passages we have already quoted, in which the divinity is distinguished from the humanity, and the many other passages existing throughout Scripture, may well stop the mouth of the most contentious. I will shortly add a few observations, which will still better dispose of this fiction. For the present, one passage will suffice—Christ would not have called his body a temple (John 2:19), had not the Godhead distinctly dwelt in it. Wherefore, as Nestorius had been justly condemned in the Council of Ephesus, so afterwards was Eutyches in those of Constantinople and Chalcedon, it being not more lawful to confound the two natures of Christ than to divide them.”

Calvin’s opinions on Christology are carried throughout the Reformed Tradition in Europe and England.

- a) **The First Helvetic Confession (1536)** states: “This Lord Christ, a true Son of God, true God and man, assumed a true human nature, with body and soul, in the time thereto appointed by God from eternity. He has two distinct, unmixed natures in one single, indissoluble Person. The assumption of human nature took place in order that He might quicken us who were dead and make us joint heirs of God. This also is the reason He has become our brother.”
- b) **The Gallican Confession (1539)** states: “We believe that in one person, that is, Jesus Christ, the two natures are actually and inseparably joined and united, and yet each remains in its proper character; so that in this union the divine nature, retaining its attributes, remained uncreated, infinite, and all-pervading; and the human nature remained finite, having its form, measure, and

attributes; and although Jesus Christ, in rising from the dead, bestowed immortality upon his body, yet he did not take from it the truth of its nature, and we so consider him in his divinity that we do not despoil him of his humanity.”

- c) **The Scottish Confession (1560)** states: “When the fullness of time came God sent His Son, His eternal Wisdom the substance of His own glory, into this world, who took the nature of humanity from the substance of a woman, a virgin, by means of the Holy ghost. And so was born the ‘just seed of David,’ the ‘Angel of the great counsel of God,’ the very Messiah promised, whom we confess and acknowledge to be Emmanuel, true God and true man, two perfect natures united and joined in one person. So by our Confession we condemn the damnable and pestilent heresies of Arius, Marcion, Eutyches, Nestorius, and such others as did either deny the eternity of His Godhead, or the truth of His humanity, or confounded them, or else divided them.”

(The Belgic Confession [1561] is quite good, but perhaps the most detailed exposition is found in the Second Helvetic Confession [1566], chapter XI).

- d) **The Westminster Confession (1647)** states (VIII.2): “The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man’s nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin: being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.”
3. **The Church of England**, by virtue of its Thirty-Nine Articles (1539), confirms traditional Christological orthodoxy (Article II): “The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man’s nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.”

**PARENTHESIS:** Anabaptist Christology.

The Reformation Confessions often have sections in which theological aberrants are handled. In those sections, Anabaptists are usually listed. This charge of denying Christ's humanity is sometimes valid, particularly in reference the Schwenkfelders and Menno Simons of Holland. Simons, influenced by Melchoir Hoffman, advocated a docetic Christology, a denial of our full humanity. Simons had an "unusual view" of the manner in which the Word became flesh: "The Word did not take on flesh but himself became flesh. Jesus did not receive his body from Mary; He became a body which was received by Mary in birth and through the Holy Spirit that she might nourish Him and bring Him into the world according to the way of nature."

**C. In the Non-Protestant Tradition.**

In our discussion of the doctrine of Trinitarianism the same rubric was followed as here. Within the Protestant Tradition in the Reformation Era, a movement emerged which began in Michael Servetus and spread rapidly having "rationalistic hermeneutic" and giving rise to Socinianism in Poland and Unitarianism in England and America. As the teachings of Servetus seriously altered Theology Proper, it impaired and reconstructed Christology.

1. **Servetus and Christology.** In essence Servetus held to a form of Eutychianism that denied both true humanity and deity. Calvin wrote (2.14, 5): "But in our age, also, has arisen a not less fatal monster, Michael Servetus, who for the Son of God has substituted a figment composed of the essence of God, spirit, flesh, and three uncreated elements. First, indeed, he denies that Christ is the Son of God, for any other reason than because he was begotten in the womb of the Virgin by the Holy Spirit. The tendency of this crafty device is to make out, by destroying the distinction of the two natures, that Christ is somewhat composed of God and man, and yet is not to be deemed God and man. Servetus calumniously charges us with making the Son of God double, when we say that the eternal Word before he was clothed with flesh was already the Son of God: as if we said anything more than that he was manifested in the flesh. Although he was God before he became man, he did not therefore begin to be a new God. Nor is there any greater absurdity in holding that the Son of God, who by eternal generation ever had the property of being a Son, appeared in the flesh."

Again (2.14, 18): "But though Servetus heaped together a number of horrid dogmas, to which, perhaps, others would not subscribe, you will find that all who refuse to acknowledge the Son of God except in the flesh are obliged, when urged more closely, to admit that he was a Son, for no other reason than because he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin by the Holy Spirit; just like the absurdity of the ancient Manichees, that the soul of man was derived by transfusion from God, from its being said, that

he breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). for they lay such stress on the name of Son that they leave no distinction between the natures, but babbling to his human nature, he was begotten of God. Thus, the eternal generation of Wisdom, celebrated by Solomon (Prov. 8:22, seq.), is destroyed, and no kind of Godhead exists in the Mediator: or a phantom is substituted instead of man. The grosser delusions of Servetus, by which he imposed upon himself and some others, it were useful to refute, that pious readers might be warned by the example, to confine themselves within the bounds of soberness and modesty: however, I deem it superfluous here, as I have already done it in a special treatise."

The Gallican Confession states: "In this we detest all the heresies that have of old troubled the Church, and especially the diabolical conceits of Servetus, which attribute a fantastical divinity to the Lord Jesus, calling him the idea and pattern of all things, and the personal or figurative Son of God, and, finally, attribute to him a body of three uncreated elements, thus confusing and destroying the two natures."

2. **Unitarianism and Christology.** Servetus' views affected the "Protestant Enlightenment Tradition" as Socinianism in Poland, Unitarianism in England, and Unitarianism in America (the "rational hermeneutic" was not applied by Arminians and Wesleys to Theology Proper or Christology!). A representative example of Unitarian Christology is William Ellery Channing (1780–1842), America's leading nineteenth century Unitarian, as seen in the famous ordination address of Jared Sparks (1819), "Unitarian Christianity". He stated: (*Works*, 373): "Having thus given our views of the unity of God, I proceed, in the second place, to observe that we believe in the unity of Jesus Christ." Again he states (373): "We believe that Jesus is one mind, one soul, one being, as truly one as we are, and equally distinct from the one God. We complain of the doctrine of the Trinity, that, not satisfied with making God three beings, it makes Jesus Christ two beings, and thus introduces infinite confusion into our conceptions of his character. This corruption of Christianity, alike repugnant to common sense and to the general strain of Scripture, is a remarkable proof of the power of a false philosophy in disfiguring the simple truth of Jesus....According to this doctrine, Jesus Christ, instead of being one mind, one conscious, intelligent principle, whom we can understand, consists of two souls, two minds; the one divine, the other human; the one weak, the other almighty; the one ignorant, the other omniscient. Now we maintain that this is to make Christ two beings."

He argues his point from two bases: the first biblical, the second theological. From the Scriptures he argues absolute silence on the presence of two natures ("we ask our brethren to point to some plain, direct passage, where Christ is said to be composed of two minds

infinitely different yet consisting in one person”), as well as the silence of Jesus (“phraseology respecting himself would have been colored by this peculiarity”). Theologically, he argues the mystery of the God-Man’s death and the seeming change in his being relative to immutability. He wrote (*Works*, 375-76): “Trinitarians profess to derive some important advantages from their mode of viewing Christ. It furnishes them, they tell us, with an infinite atonement, for it shows them an infinite being suffering for their sins. Their confidence with which this fallacy is repeated astonishes us. When pressed with the question whether they really believe that the infinite and unchangeable God suffered and died on the cross, they acknowledge that this is not true, but that Christ’s human mind alone sustained the pains of death. How have we, then, an infinite sufferer? This language seems to us an imposition on common minds, and very derogatory to God’s justice, as if this attitude could be satisfied by a sophism and a fiction.”

“We are also told that Christ is a more interesting object, that his love and mercy are more felt, when he is viewed as the Supreme God, who left his glory to take humanity and to suffer for men. That Trinitarians are strongly moved by this representation, we do not mean to deny; but we think their emotions altogether founded on a misapprehension of their own doctrines. They talk of the second person of the Trinity's leaving his glory and his Father’s bosom to visit and save the world. But this second person, being the unchangeable and infinite God, was evidently capable of parting with the least degree of his perfection and felicity. At the moment of his taking flesh, he was as intimately present with his Father as before, and equally with his Father filled the heaven, and earth, and immensity. This Trinitarians acknowledge; and still they profess to be touched and overwhelmed by the amazing humiliation of his immutable being!”

#### IV. CONCLUSION.

The purpose of this lesson has been to survey the history of the development of the doctrine of the Person of Christ in the Medieval and Reformation Church. Christology has not progressed, only retrogressed since Chalcedon, at least from a non-monophysite viewpoint. The Medieval Age witnessed the politically/theologically motivated Monophysite revival of Eutychian thought, the ramifications of it in Monothelism, and the Adoptionist-Nestorian issue in the Carolingian Revival. In the Reformation era the Romish Church and the Reformers agreed in the Chalcedonian formula, but the teachings of Servetus, later Biddle of England and Channing of America were a heralding of a return to a monarchian Christ which was a distinguishing feature of the “Religious Enlightenment” with its “rationalistic hermeneutic.”