

Simplified Definitions: Christology

These definitions of Christological errors are extremely concise and thus simplified. For further details see other papers, such as ‘The Divine Focus’.

Jesus is God and man

Jesus is one person subsisting in two natures. He shares the essence of God with the Father and the Spirit in his divine nature. Yet he is also a real human in his human nature. The two natures are separate.

Communicatio idiomatum

[The communication of properties.] This explains the properties and relationship of the human and divine natures of Christ. These properties belong to a single person and both the human and divine properties are ascribed to that one person without any confusion or mixture.

Over-emphasised divinity errors

Gnosticism

Christ is an aeon (sort of angel or emanation from God) who taught divine knowledge. Docetism is the teaching that Christ only appeared to be human but was a sort of celestial phantasm. He did not suffer.

Modalistic Monarchianism (Patripassianism in the West or Sabellianism in the East)

God is one single person as well as one essence. Father, Son and Spirit are modes of God in his dealings with men (Modalism). ‘Monarchianism’ = focus on the Father. ‘Patripassianism’ = the Father suffers.

Apollinarianism

Christ was divine and no human nature existed in him. Christ had a true body and an animal soul but the Logos took the place of a rational spirit. Christ’s human flesh had no independent mind or will; the Logos replaced Christ’s human spirit.

Eutychianism

Jesus had neither a divine nature, nor a human nature, but a composite new sort of nature that was part human – part divine. An early type of Monophysitism.

Monophysitism

[‘One-nature’.] Christ only has one nature that was essentially divine.

Monothelitism

[‘One-will’.] Monophysites who particularly opposed the idea of two wills in Christ, as well as two natures. They taught that Christ only had one will.

Over-emphasised humanity errors

Ebionism

Jesus was the Messiah but only a man, a great prophet.

Arianism

The Son was created by the Father in eternity; Jesus is the first creature and not divine.

Adoptionism

Christ was a man, born of a virgin, given power to do miracles and after resurrection was adopted into the Godhead.

Dynamic Monarchianism

The Logos is a mere power within God not a Person. This power was effective in Christ and deified him (Adoptionism). Christ was a man under the influence of God.

Nestorianism

Jesus is two persons. The virgin birth resulted in a man who was accompanied by the Logos.