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Historical Christology
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In his book *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, Kereszty surveys, outlines, and explains the development of Christology and the different theological understandings about the person of Jesus Christ.

**The Soteriology and Christology of the Church Fathers**

Central to the soteriology of the Church Fathers was the concept that “Christ could not have saved us had he not been in one person true God and true man.”¹ This understanding then helped shape and form their understanding of whom Jesus Christ is. The Son of God connects humanity to Divinity; He enables us to enter into communion with God.² He does this through reaching down to mankind by taking on a human nature (especially, through His suffering and death), and then reaching up to God through His Divine nature and His resurrection and ascension.³ The Christology of the Church Fathers, in combatting the heresies of Docetism, Gnosticism, Adoptionism, Arianism, and Apollinarianism, could be characterized as a consistent reaffirmation that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man, one single person who was the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity (“three persons and one substance”⁴)⁵ – although the idea of “person” took some time to develop.⁶ The School of Alexandria tended to focus on the Divinity of Jesus, and the School of Antioch tended to focus on the humanity of Jesus.⁷

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³ Kereszty, *Jesus Christ*, 228, 257.
⁵ Kereszty, *Jesus Christ*, 230–262.
⁶ Kereszty, *Jesus Christ*, 252.
Medieval Christology

The Christologies of St. Bernard, St. Anselm, and St. Thomas are good examples of medieval Christology. St. Bernard’s Christology focused on applying the insights from the life of Christ to the life of the Christian and “the conformation of the soul to the” Word of God. St. Anselm held that “the death of Christ” was essential for the proper and just ordering of the universe; especially in that only God could provide satisfaction for the dishonor to God, but only man owed that satisfaction, and therefore the God-man had to provide that satisfaction. St. Thomas’s Christology was built on the principle of the hypostatic union: that the eternal Word, the second person of the Trinity and whose nature was Divine, “united to himself” and in His person a human nature.

Christology of the Reformation

Luther appears to fuse the two natures of Christ, so that something proper to one nature can be attributed specifically to the other nature – which went beyond the classical view that what is proper to one nature can be attributed to the second person of the Blessed Trinity. Luther also conceived of Jesus, in dying for our sins, as taking on the role of the ultimate Sinner (i.e., as if Christ Himself were guilty). Calvin follows Luther in this “juridical substitution” theory, but Calvin also focuses on the three offices of Christ: priest, prophet, and king. Later liberal protestant thinkers attempted to limit Christ to the realm of a moral/ethical teacher (Kant),

8 Kereszty, Jesus Christ, 262–268.
9 Kereszty, Jesus Christ, 268–272.
10 Kereszty, Jesus Christ, 272–278.
11 Kereszty, Jesus Christ, 280.
12 Kereszty, Jesus Christ, 282–283.
13 Kereszty, Jesus Christ, 290–296.
HISTORICAL CHRISTOLOGY

posited that humanity came out of God and is destined to return and collapse back into God (Hegel), or reduced Jesus to simply a man (*not* God) who was *perfectly* aware of his “absolute dependence on God.”\(^{14}\)

**Twentieth Century Protestant Christologies**

The ideas of Bultmann, Barth, and Bonhoeffer grew out of crisis theology.\(^{15}\) Crisis theology holds that God and humanity are opposed to each other due to the perfect holiness of God and the sinfulness of humanity, and the chasm between them is “absolute.”\(^{16}\) This means that the Incarnation is impossible, and therefore Jesus does not have a divine nature.\(^{17}\) Bultmann held that Jesus was a historical person but the historical details of His life are outside of our reach, and that the New Testament needed to be de-mythologized in order for it to be properly understood by modern humans.\(^{18}\) Barth focuses on the work of Jesus reconciling the world to God.\(^{19}\) He accepts the Incarnation, but he “refuses to see the hypostatic union as distinct from soteriology.”\(^{20}\) Bonhoeffer highlighted the importance following the example of Jesus and living for others, and recognized the presence of Christ in the world today, especially through “the Word, the sacraments, and the community.”\(^{21}\)

\(^{14}\) Kereszty, *Jesus Christ*, 296–310.
\(^{15}\) Kereszty, *Jesus Christ*, 312.
\(^{16}\) Kereszty, *Jesus Christ*, 312.
\(^{17}\) Kereszty, *Jesus Christ*, 312.
\(^{18}\) Kereszty, *Jesus Christ*, 312–317.
\(^{19}\) Kereszty, *Jesus Christ*, 320–328.
References