

CHRISTOLOGY - THE STUDY OF JESUS CHRIST.

BACKGROUND TO CHRISTOLOGY.

JESUS - HISTORICAL

CHRIST - FAITH.

INTRODUCTION:

HE IS BOTH A MAN OF HISTORY AND OF FAITH. CHRISTOLOGY IS FACED WITH A CHOICE, DO YOU BEGIN WITH HISTORY OR DO YOU BEGIN WITH FAITH? THE MODERN READER WOULD PROBABLY WANT TO BEGIN WITH THE 'FACTS' THIS WAS NOT THE PRIMARY INTEREST OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS - THEY WERE MORE INTERESTED IN THE FAITH SIDE OF THINGS. IT WASN'T UNTIL THE 19TH CENTURY THAT THE FACTS OF THE MAN CAME INTO TREND.

BY LOOKING AT THE FACTS PEOPLE HOPED TO GET A CLOSER INSIGHT INTO THE LIFE OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY MAN, BELIEVED BY CHRISTIANS TO BE THE CHRIST.

THE MID 20TH CENTURY SAW A WAVE OF RENEWAL IN CHRISTOLOGY. AMERICAN THEOLOGIAN **ELIZABETH A JOHNSON** IN HER BOOK **CONSIDER JESUS: WAVES OF RENEWAL IN CHRISTOLOGY** WROTE ABOUT CHRISTOLOGY BEING LIKE A WAVE. SHE SAID THAT DOWN THROUGH THE CENTURIES THERE HAD BEEN WAVES OF INTEREST, CHANGE AND RENEWAL IN CHRISTOLOGY. IN HER BOOK SHE WENT ON TO OUTLINE THE DEVELOPMENTS IN CHRISTOLOGY. SHE NOTED 5 MAIN TRENDS.

HISTORY OF CHRISTOLOGY: THE PARTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

1. BIBLICAL CHRISTOLOGY (1ST CENTURY)

This refers to the very foundation and basics of Christology. The very early Christians were who knew Jesus and had encountered his work wrote down his words and deeds. Their belief was that he was the Christ - the son of God who had come to save humanity. During his lifetime Jesus had asked the Question, 'Who do You say that I am? The answers that came out after his death tell us that many people thought different things about Jesus showing that there has always been more than one Christology in the Christian community.

Matthew - Jesus is the new Moses, teacher of the new law

Mark - Jesus is the suffering Messiah

Luke - Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit is the saviour of all

John - Jesus is the word of God Made flesh.

2. CONCILIAR CHRISTOLOGY (2-7TH CENTURY) - INTERESTED IN JESUS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. IF JESUS WAS JUST AN ORDINARY HUMAN BEING, THEN HOW COULD HE ALSO BE GOD.

The identity of Jesus and his Relationship with God is what occupied theologians most at this time. They were very concerned with the divinity of Jesus - was he human or was he God? If he was fully human then how could he also be fully God? This era reflects a movement in Christology that wanted who he was as opposed to what he did.

Some theologians thought he was fully human while others thought he was fully God and they argued over this point bitterly. Two Church Councils gave further instruction on the matter.

The Council of Nicea in 325 CE which came up with the Nicene Creed said "One God from One God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, one being with the father.

The Council of Chalcedon (541CE) stressed that Jesus was fully human AND fully divine.

3. MEDIEVAL CHRISTOLOGY (11TH-16TH CENTURY) - UNIVERSITIES AT THE TIME STARED TEACHING AND STUDYING THEOLOGY (CHRISTOLOGY)

This period of Christology reflects the emergence of universities and centers of learning. Theology was being studied in universities and part of this study was Christology. Philosophy was emerging as a huge area of study with great emphasis being placed on logic. By the end of this time period those who engaged in Christology were calling for a return to the basics found in the bible.

4. POST-TRIDENTINE CHRISTOLOGY (16TH-20TH CENTURIES) - PRODUCTION OF CATECHISMS, FORMAL PRAYER, STATIONS OF THE CROSS - THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMORIZING THINGS.

This was a time of great change in society and indeed our world. With the emergence of the enlightenment and new ways of thinking and reflecting on the world the Church tried to protect its roots and its heritage by organizing its Christology into a fixed and unchangeable format. They wanted people to learn off the important things. They wanted the faithful to have the ease of memorizing things. This brought about the production of Catechisms (books with the teachings of the church in them that people learned off). At this point in the history of Christology people began to devote themselves strongly to Christ e.g. stations of the cross, devotions to the sacred heart, etc.

5. TODAY/RENEWAL (1951 - present) - SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. CHURCH ON THE BRINK OF RENEWAL. NEW WAYS OF LOOKING AT JESUS. LOW ASCENDING CHRISTOLOGY.

In 1951 The church celebrated the 1500th anniversary of the Council of Chalcedon (where Jesus was declared to be fully human and fully divine). This celebration gave rise to a new interest in Christology.

A famous Theologian called Karl Rahner urged people to take a new look at Jesus Christ and see what his message was for the modern day.

The Second vatican Council in the 60s urged people to become more involved in the everyday life of the Church.

The 20th century has seen a growing sensitivity to the plight of humans suffering in our world, it has seen two world wars, The Holocaust, mass genocide, nuclear disasters and much more besides. All of these things have forced us to look at Jesus Christ and his message in a new way.

The development of the internet and mass media has made us realise how inter connected we all are - all of these changes and occurrences have influenced Christology and the question at the heart of it all - Who Do You Say That I Am? - is still very much alive today.

Irish theologian Dermot Lane in his book 'The Reality of Jesus' says that the mystery of the resurrection of Jesus is at the heart of Christ - He calls this mystery 'The Christ Event' He says that if we fail to see Jesus as fully human then we cannot relate to him, but if we fail to see him as fully divine then we are reducing his role. Both elements go together. He calls this understanding a 'low ascending Christology' by this he means first we look at the Historical Jesus and then understand him as Christ and Lord.