

# Philippians Series

Lesson #049

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Dean Bible Ministries

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# What Did the Post-Apostolic Church Believe About Jesus?

## Philippians 2:5–11; Other Scriptures



## **Three Fundamental Questions:**

**Who was Jesus *Before* He Came?**

**What was Jesus *When* He Came?**

***Why* did the Logos, the Second Person of the Trinity, come to earth?**

## **Three Fundamental Questions:**

**Who was Jesus *Before* He Came? The Arian controversy**

**What was Jesus *When* He Came? Apollinarius, Nestorius, Eutyches**

***Why* did the Logos, the second Person of the Trinity, come to earth? Understanding that Jesus must be undiminished Deity and genuine sinless humanity for salvation to be accomplished.**

**Who was Jesus before He came?**

**Understanding Who God is: unity and plurality**

**Did Jesus preexist creation? and if so, is He eternal?**

**1. Distinguish preexistence from eternality of Christ**

**Passages in the Old Testament which teach His preexistence**

**Passages which indicate His eternality (Deity)**

**Passages which predict the coming of the Messiah**

**Passages which indicate His humanity**

**Passages which indicate His Deity**

**2. Passages in the New Testament that teach His Deity and Humanity**

**Passages in the Gospels which indicate His humanity**

**Passages in the Gospels which teach His Deity**

**Passages in the Epistles which indicate His humanity and Deity**

**Who was Jesus before He came?**

**Understanding Who God is: unity and plurality**

**Did Jesus preexist creation? and if so, is He eternal?**

**3. Passages that indicate the Offices of Christ**

**The Messiah has the office of Prophet**

**The Messiah has the office of Priest**

**The Messiah has the office of King**

**4. Conclusion: The biblical teaching on the God-Man.**

**5. What did the early Church believe?**

**The early Church, immediately following the last apostle, is vague and only repeats biblical statements. But they only repeat that He is God, He is man, but they do not try to explain it.**

**The Apologists and Theologians make attempts, but fail because they are too influenced by their cultural worldviews.**

**Refining, Debating, and Expressing the God-Man Savior**

# **What Did the Post-Apostolic Church Believe about Jesus?**

## **Early Christology**

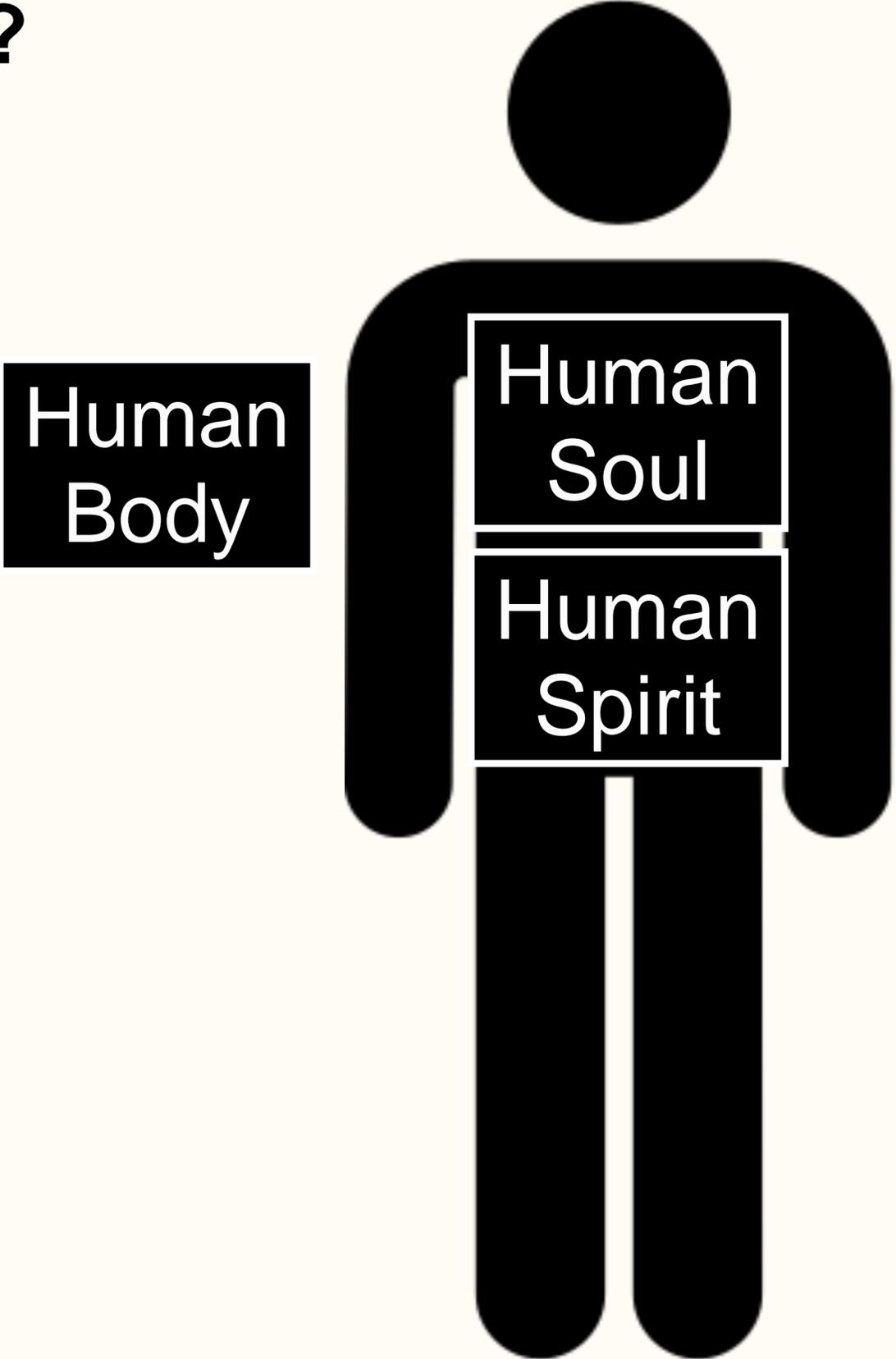
**Key Scriptures: Gal. 4:4, 5; 2 Cor. 5:19; Matt. 1:23; 1 Cor. 15:45;  
Php. 2:6–7; John 1:1–14; Heb. 1:2–3**

## What is Christology?

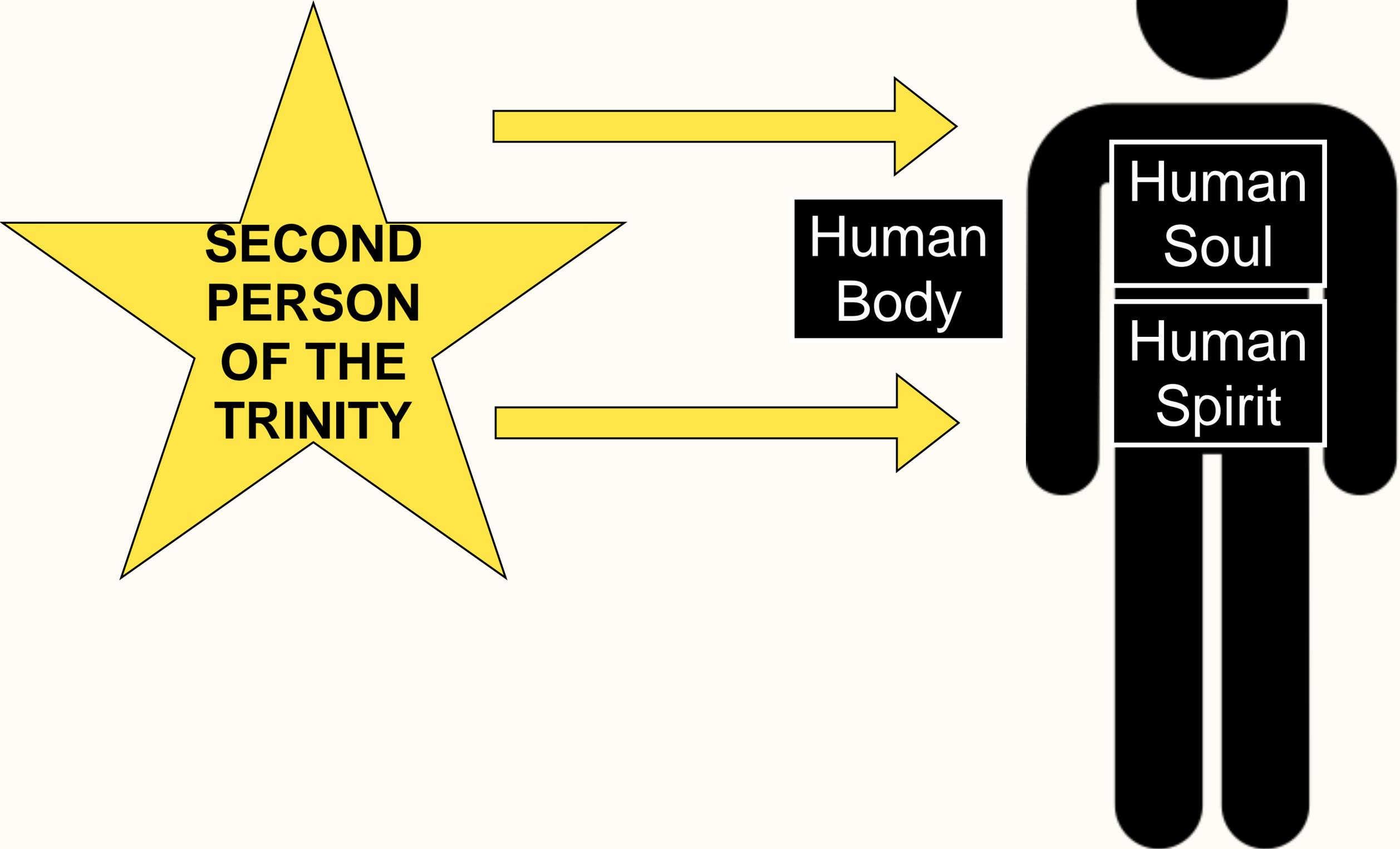
**“Christology at its heart is the ‘inquiry and reflection’ that are concerned with Jesus in his messianic character. In other words, Christology asks what is presupposed and implied by the fact that Jesus is the elect ‘Son of God,’ the one through whose life, death, and resurrection God has acted to realize his purpose for humanity; and this fact imposes, from the beginning a certain logic on Christology. To understand or evaluate Jesus christologically means, on the one hand, to ask about his relation to God [who He was before He came] and, on the other, to seek a way of expressing his representative character as a human being [who He was when He came]—his status as the one in whom humanity’s common destiny is both summed up and determined.” ~Norris, 2**

**We must grow by means of the grace  
and  
the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18)**

# How do we understand Jesus?



# How do we understand Jesus?



# **The Early Church Fathers (AD 100–150)**

**1 Clement 32:2, “For from him come the priests and all the Levites who minister at the altar of God; from him comes the Lord Jesus according to the flesh; from him come kings and rulers and governors according to the line of Judah; and his other scepters will be held in no small honor, because God promised that ‘your seed will be as the stars of the heaven.’ ”**

**36.1, “This is the way, beloved, in which we found our salvation, Jesus Christ, the high priest of our offerings, the defender and helper of our weaknesses.<sup>2</sup> Through this one we look intently to the heights of the heavens; through this one we see as in a mirror his unblemished and lofty face; through this one the eyes of our heart have been opened; through this one our foolish and darkened understanding springs up<sup>4</sup> into the light; through this one the Master has willed the immortal knowledge that we should taste ‘Who, being the radiance of his majesty, is so much greater than angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name.’ ”**

## ***The Shepherd of Hermas***

**“<sup>4</sup> But why did the Lord take his Son and the glorious angels as counselor concerning the inheritance of the servant? Listen. <sup>5</sup> The Holy Spirit, which pre-exists, which created all”**

**9.6.1 83.1 “And behold, after a little while I saw a procession of many men coming, and in the midst of them was a particular man, tall with such size that he rose above the tower. [1]**

**9.7.1 84.1 “Therefore, having completed these things, the glorious man and ruler of the whole tower called the shepherd and handed all the stones over to him, those lying beside the tower which had been removed from the building, and he said to him,” [2]**

## *The Shepherd*

**9.12.6–8 “Do you see,” he said, “the crowd that was building the tower?” “I see,” I said, “sir.” “Those,” he said, “are all glorious angels, by these, then, the Lord [has been completely surrounded]. 3 But the door is the Son of God. This is the only entrance to the Lord. Therefore no one will enter into it otherwise, except through his Son. “Do you see,” he said, “the six men and the glorious and great man among them who walked around the tower and rejected the stones from the building?” “I see,” I said, “sir.” 8 “The glorious man,” he said, “is the Son of God, and those are six glorious angels supporting him on the right and on the left.” He said, “None of these glorious angels will enter into the presence of God without him. Whoever does not receive his name will not enter into the kingdom of God.”**

## **Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–c. 107)**

### **1. Jesus was the son of God**

**Mag 8:2, “For the divine prophets lived according to Christ Jesus. Because of this they were also persecuted, being inspired <sup>4</sup> by his grace, to fully convince the disobedient that there is one God who revealed himself through Jesus Christ his Son, who is his Word <sup>5</sup> that came forth from silence, who in everything pleased the one who sent him.”**

**2. Jesus was also the son of Mary, who was physically human.**

**Trallians 9:1–2 9.1 “Therefore be deaf whenever anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, <sup>1</sup> the one of the family of David, the one of Mary, he who truly was born, both ate and drank, truly was persecuted by Pontius Pilate, truly was crucified and died, being seen by those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>2</sup> who also truly was raised from the dead, his Father having raised him. In the same way he also, his Father, will likewise raise up us who believe in him in Christ Jesus, without whom we do not have true life.” [1]**

**Ephesians 7:2 “There is one physician, both fleshly and spiritual, born and unborn, God in man, true life in death, both of Mary and of God, first subject to suffering and then free of suffering, Jesus Christ our Lord.” [1]**

# **The Apologists (AD 150–200)**

**Justin Martyr (c. 100–c. 165)**

**The Logos is God's Son, distinct from the Father, but begotten from Him. The Logos is the one who reveals the Father to Israel and was incarnate body, soul, and spirit"**

**1 Apology 10:1**

**His contribution is heavily influenced by Stoic and Platonic philosophy.**

**The Logos is primarily reason.**

**The Logos is not the first or ultimate Deity.**

**The Logos is derivative and thus inferior to God.**

**For Justin: The Logos is the mediator between God and His creatures.**

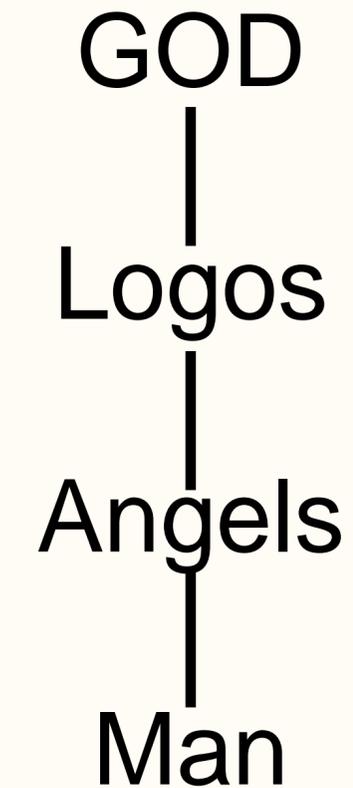
**Norris: “The indescribable, incomprehensible Creator touches the world only through his derivative self-expression. It is the Logos who forms the universe, who ‘appears’ to Abraham and Moses, and who confers knowledge of God on all humanity by giving people a share in God’s rational nature.”**

**The Problem: The Logos theology suggested a plurality which is opposed by the Monarchians who emphasized the unity or oneness of God.**

**It uses a chain of being idea:**

**The Logos is less than fully God, and he isn't fully man.**

**Also the struggle to explain how Infinite God could take on finite humanity.**



**Melito of Sardis (d. c. 190), Bp. of Sardis**

**Christ is fully God who become incarnate for the purpose of redemption of mankind.**

**The incarnation was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and the Mosaic Covenant. Melito emphasizes the value of God's people before Christ.**

**The incarnation was a genuine, physical reality, a rebuttal to Docetism.**

**He describes Christ as 'by nature God and man'.**

## **Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–c. 200)**

- 1. For him the problem in Marcion is their denial of the true deity of the Creator. They in effect held to two “gods.”**
- 2. Irenaeus clearly understood that the ultimate God was also the Creator and was intimately involved with His creatures in the material realm.**
- 3. Irenaeus understood Justin’s arguments but rejected his view of the intermediate Logos. Irenaeus recognized that it suggested a plurality of gods.**

**For Irenaeus, Christ is fully God and accomplishes the mediation, not because he is an “in between” creature, but that as full Deity He takes on true humanity and it is the incarnation act which is the mediation.**

**For Irenaeus the incarnation is real “because it represents the unity of God with humanity and the unity of human history with God. God the Logos takes to himself in Christ the being of Adam.” ~Norris, 12**

## **Tertullian, Quintus Septimius Florens of Carthage (c. 160–c. 225)**

- 1. Tertullian understood that salvation, redemption, involved the whole human person–body, soul, and spirit.**
- 2. He understood that the physical bodily resurrection of Christ indicated that the whole of physical reality of man had to be saved. This means that Christ’s death redeems the entire physical creation from the curse.**
- 3. In *Against Praxeas*, he argued against Monarchians who emphasized the absolute unity of God. In Monarchianism there is the problem that there cannot be a plurality.**

## Tertullian of Carthage

4. Tertullian coined the word *trinitas* in order to explain the plurality in the divine. That Son was a term that did not restrict itself to the humanity of Jesus and Father to the deity of Jesus. He distinguished between Logos and Father, but both fully divine. Two separate *personae*. He said Christ was one person. And in Christ a duality of two “substances” flesh and Spirit, i.e., human and divine ways of being. For him these two were mingled, though “not in such a way as to react on one another and be mutually changed.” (Norris, 14) The two substances were unaltered in the one Person of Christ who was both human and divine.

## **Origen of Alexandria (c. 185–c. 254)**

- 1. The Logos is the mediator between God and His created order.**
- 2. The Logos, though eternal, is in some way not fully divine.**
- 3. The rational spirits all fell and had to work their way back to God through knowledge.**
- 4. Wisdom/Logos was the mediator to the fallen spirits which led to the incarnation.**

## **Origen of Alexandria (c. 185–c. 254)**

- 5. The unification of the Logos with the one rational spirit which did not fall away from God becomes the soul of Jesus.**
- 6. The next stage came when this soul was embodied through human birth.**

## **7. In conclusion**

- Origen is similar to Justin in the way he expresses the need for a mediator.**
- His universe is hierarchical, heavily influenced by chain-of-being ideas.**
- For him the divine does not mix very directly with matter.**
- The Logos mediates God to the soul, so the soul mediates God's Son to the body.**
- This double mediation results in Jesus as a human being, soul inhabiting body, perfectly united as intelligence with the original, the divine Intelligence or Wisdom.**

## **Conclusion:**

- 1. In the tradition of Justin, there is a view that the Logos is something less than eternal God.**
- 2. This developed from the influence of Greek philosophy.**
- 3. By the time of Origen the worldview is shifting from Middle to Neo-Platonism. In essence, the forms of Platonism all held to the material world as being somewhat inherently corrupt, if not evil, and that ultimate reality was the ideal, the spirit, and thus their presupposition was that Christ could not have had a genuine material body for that would have diminished His righteousness.**

- 4. On the other hand, there is a clear statement of Christ as undiminished deity and genuine sinless humanity, but how that was to be explained was either ignored or various attempts were less than honest with the text.**
- 5. This conflict led to the conflict between Arius and Athanasius and consumed much of the fourth century.**

# **The Christological Controversies of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries**

**Arianism**  
**Apollinarianism**  
**Nestorianism**  
**Eutychianism**

**The Council of Chalcedon (451)**

# Arius vs. Athanasius

- 1. All agreed that the Logos/Wisdom of God was divine.**
  - But what *divine* meant was not clear.**
  - Did it denote a degree of deity, full deity, was it everything attributed to the Father God or only derivative?**
- 2. All of these men held to views that were derived from Greek philosophy, especially influenced by the idea of a continuity of being, which was explicit in Gnosticism.**
- 3. The problem was how to explain *Who* Jesus was before He came, after He came, and to understand *Why* He came.**

## **Arius (d. 336)**

**He had two beliefs:**

- 1. That the Logos could not be fully God, could not be undiminished Deity;**
- 2. That the Logos is necessary to carry out the mediatorial role between the transcendent God and the created world.**

# **Council of Nicea**

## **Three groups**

**Pro-Arians, about 10%**

**Pro-Athanasius, about 10%**

**80% had no clue, swayed by power, influence, personality.**

**Athanasius' argument was based on the necessity of the incarnation into a genuine human body in order that as true humanity, the Logos, the Messiah, could die as a substitute for mankind.**

## Nicean Creed (325)

**We believe in one God, the Father All Governing, creator of all things visible and invisible;**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father as only begotten, that is from the essence (reality) of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not created, of the same essence (*homoousian*) as the Father through whom all things came into being, both in heaven and in earth; Who for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate, becoming human. He suffered and the third day he rose, and ascended into the heavens. And he will come to judge both the living and the dead.**

**And we believe in the Holy Spirit.**

**Apollinarius of Laodicea, Apollinarius the Younger (ca 310–ca 390)**

**An orthodox Nicean and vigorously opposed the Arians.**

**The question which was the focus of his view is: did Jesus have or not have a human center of consciousness?**

**This meant that his view of the Messiah was not fully human because the rational soul in Jesus was replaced by the divine Logos.**

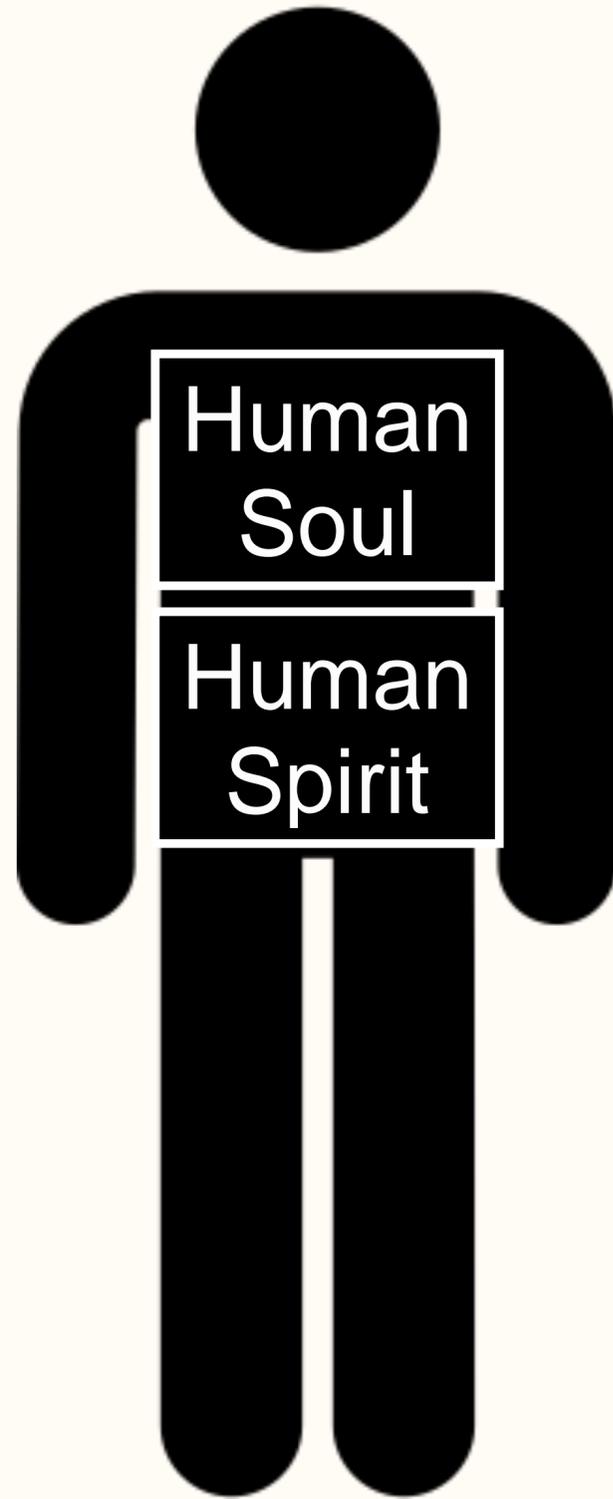
# **Apollinarianism**

## **(Denial of the True Humanity of Jesus)**

# How Did Apollinarius Understand Jesus?

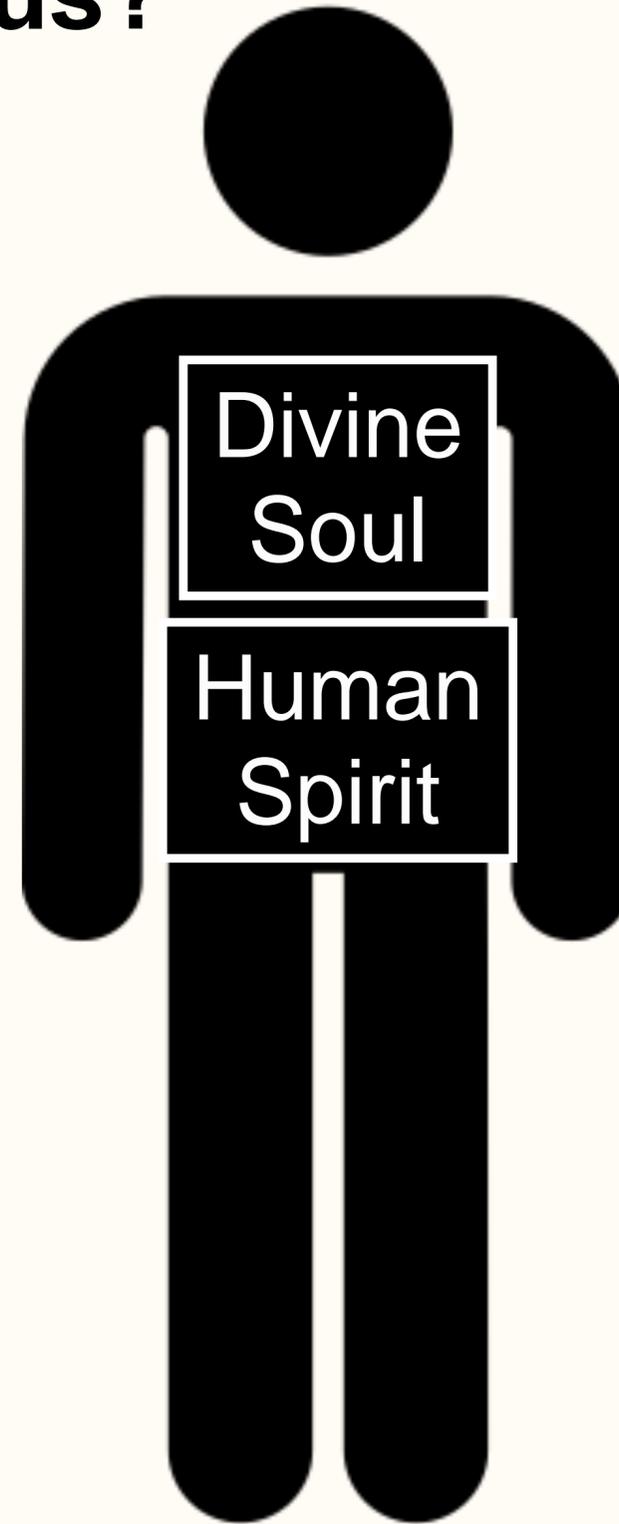
**True  
Humanity**

**Human  
Body**



**Christ**

**Human  
Body**



**Only partly  
human.**

**“The divine Logos ‘became human’ in the sense that he became embodied and thus shared the structural constitution of a human being. He became an infleshed intellect, though the intellect in question was not a created one ... He does not forget or ignore a human center of life and consciousness in Jesus. He denies it.” ~Norris, 23**

# The Creed of Constantinople (381)

**W**e believe in one God, the Father All Governing [*pan-tokratora*], creator [*poieten*] of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all time [*pro panton ton aionon*], Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not created [*poiethenta*], of the same essence [reality] as the Father [*homoousion to patri*], through Whom all things came into being, Who for us men and because of our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became human [*enanthropesanta*]. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures, and ascended to heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and will come again

## **Nestorius (b. after 351; d. after 451)**

### **Patriarch of Constantinople**

**Instead of one person two natures, He has two persons and two natures. It is somewhat disputed if he actually taught this.**

- 1. The conflict began when Nestorius claimed that Mary was not the *theotokos*, the mother of God, but the *theodochos* the recipient of God. The issue was the divine Logos born of a human mother, or is the divine Logos subject to the human attributes of Jesus, that is the mixing of the two changing the other.**

## **Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) Patriarch of Alexandria**

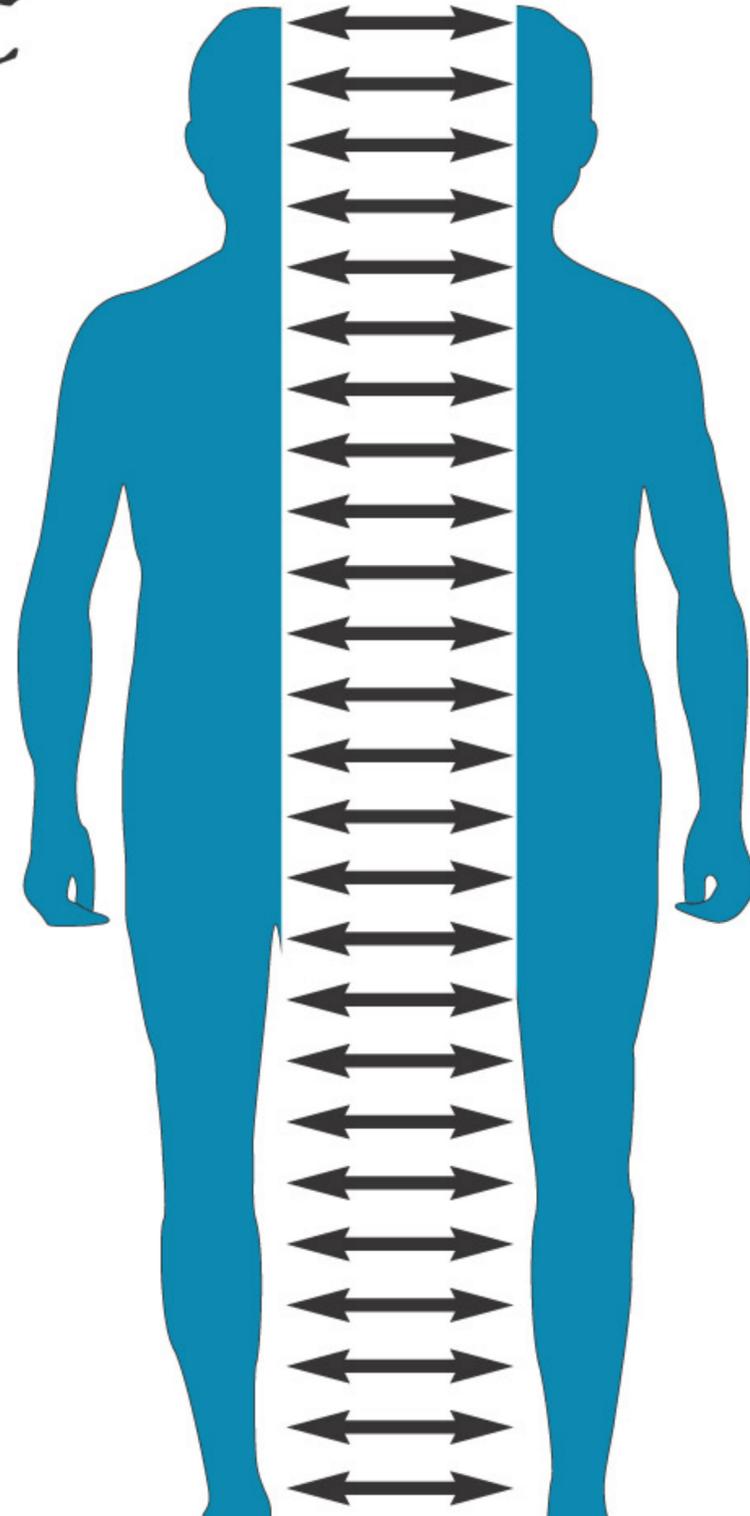
**Cyril believed that Jesus' human nature had a human body, human soul, and human spirit. He was not an Apollinarian. He saw that the one Person suffered and died, that the divine Son was born, suffered, and died, and raised from the dead. He emphasized John 1:14 and Php. 2:5–11. He insisted this incarnation did not change the deity of the Son. Cyril used the phrase “union of hypostasis” or “hypostatic union.”**

**For Cyril, the one hypostasis, the union of deity with humanity, made a full human existence without mixture or having the composite nature of Apollinarius.**

# **Nestorianism** **(A Divided Christ: Denial of Unity)**

Christ

DIVINE  
NATURE



HUMAN  
NATURE

## **Eutyches (c. 378–454)**

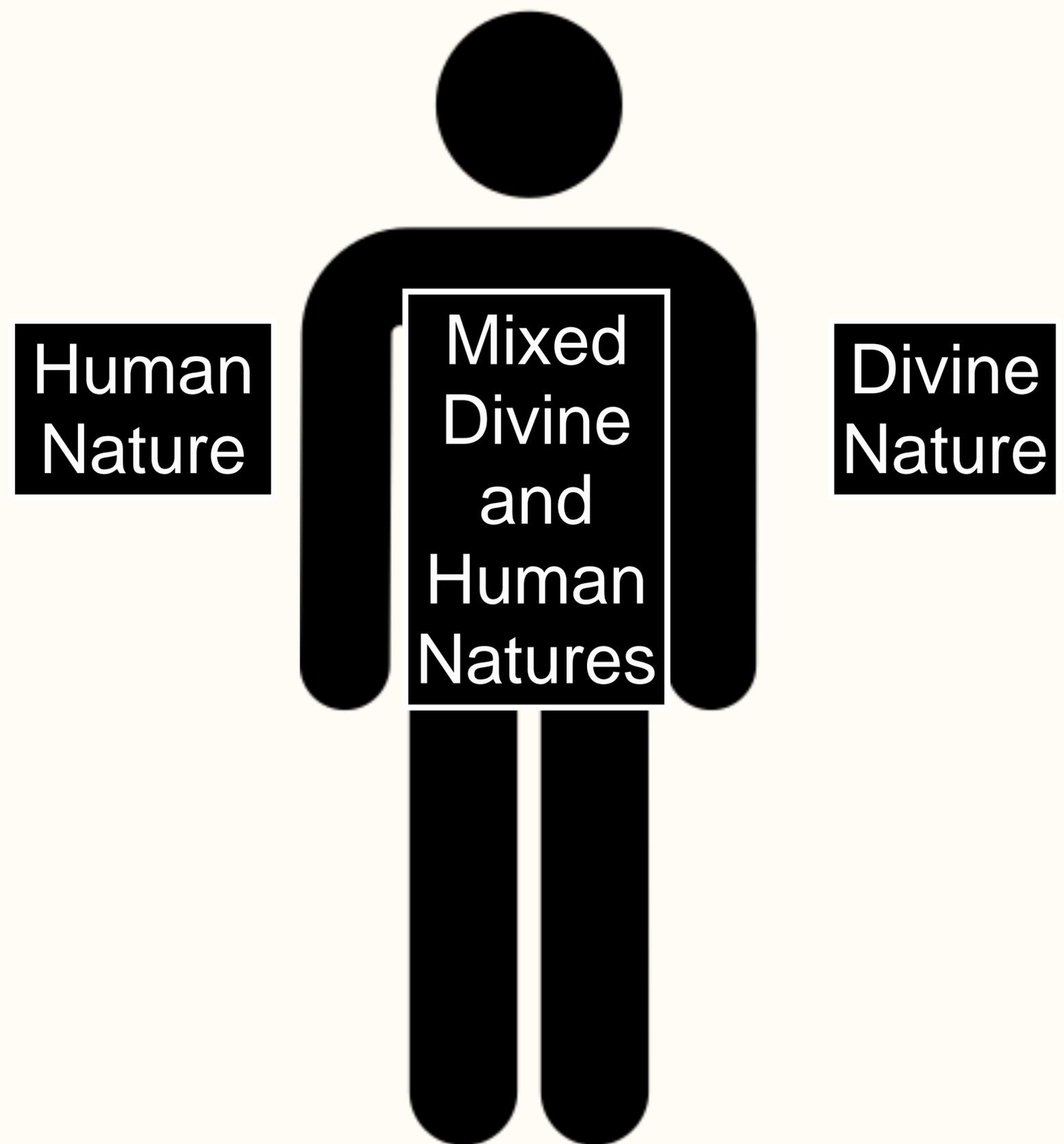
**He was the archimandrite (abbot) of a monastery in Constantinople.**

**He opposed Nestorianism and went to the opposite extreme of mixing the two natures of Christ. He argued that Christ had only one nature after the union. It was condemned at Ephesus.**

**It was Leo the Bishop of Rome who resolved the conflict in what has come to be called the Tome of Leo.**

**Eutyches was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 and exiled.**

**Eutychainism (A united  
Christ: Denial of duality;  
Mixes humanity with deity.)**



## The Creed of Chalcedon (451)

We also teach that we apprehend this one and only Christ—Son, Lord, only-begotten—in two natures [and we do this] without confusing the two natures, without transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into two separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or function. The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead the “properties” of each nature are conserved and both natures concur in one “person” and in one essence. They are not divided or cut into two persons, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Logos of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus have the prophets of old testified; thus the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us; thus the Symbol of the Fathers has handed down to us.

**hypostatic union [Greek ὑπόστασις (*hupostasis*) substantial nature, essence, actual being, reality.]**

**The hypostatic union describes the union of two natures, divine and human, in the one Person of Jesus Christ. These natures are inseparably united without loss or mixture of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal. Jesus is undiminished deity and true humanity in one Person forever.**