

Christology

Adult Sunday School, Providence Baptist Church

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Bibliography: The major work for this study will be: Erickson, Millard J., *The Word Became Flesh: a Contemporary Incarnational Christology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991. ISBN 0-8010-2063-8 (pbk.). Amazon, \$29.77.

It's major divisions are:

Part 1: The Formulation of Incarnational Christology

Part 2: Problems of Incarnational Christology

Part 3: The Construction of a Contemporary Incarnational Christology

It is divided into twenty-four chapters and we will attempt a chapter a week. I will attempt to augment his work with my own, more specific research and reading. He states that his three specific studies will be the basic orthodox interpretation of the person of Christ, contemporary Christological views, and the development of a Christology for today which maintains the orthodox view. With that in mind he notes that he will not treat certain Christological issues such as the humanity of Jesus and the virgin birth and that he will not touch on every Scriptural passage having a Christological impact, nor will he provide an in-depth exegesis of those passages that he does treat. I will try to fill in these gaps, especially the biblical passages, and especially the TNK passages, as these are of great interest to me and the fact that those passages were those utilized by the NT writers in discussing who Jesus is and explaining that to the Jews and gentiles of their day.

Dr. Erickson notes that this is the first of a planned series of more in-depth studies from his topics in his *Christian Theology*.

Introduction

“No orthodoxy without pietism, no piety without orthodoxy.”¹

Erickson notes that the study of the person of Jesus Christ is of the ‘greatest importance’ to the church and holds a major place in the history of theological discussion within the church—indeed who Jesus is was “the first real doctrinal controversy” in the church and was debated at length throughout the history of the church. The church council that serves as his jump off point for its focus on Christological issues is the Council of Chalcedon (Wikipedia has a decent article on it). The fact that it is still a major (if not *the* major) point of investigation and discussion and reconsideration within the church (or those who study the church) and recognizing the effect of the enlightenment on modern thinking, something not affecting the early church and councils, is his major motivation for this in-depth study.

According to Erickson, the major effect of post-enlightenment thinking has been to call into question: 1. The veracity of the accounts of Jesus found in the Gospels. 2. The divine nature of the person of Jesus. 3. The objectivity of the definition, debate, and discussion of the person of Jesus. He points out that several writers call this into question because the major work in this area has been done by male westerners. Newer theologians see this as a major misperception, calling it “just one more culturally and historically conditioned perspective (12).”

Terminology

Erickson begins his discussion with the NT Christological descriptions and designations. But prior to this is the witness of the TNK and it is from here we need to find the definition that names this study.

Christ (χριστός), of course, is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ *mašîḥa*), both of which mean “one who is anointed” from the Hebrew verbal root *mašah*, to smear or anoint. This can be seen in 1 Sam 16.12-13 in Samuel’s anointing of David to be king over Israel. It carries the general understanding of someone being specially designated for a specific job or function. That this included non Jews can be seen in Isaiah 45.1 where Cyrus the Persian king is called the *anointed* of the LORD.

For this study, Christology (Messiology) is the very specific investigation into the Messianic identification of Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, as Logos of God (Gen. 1.1-John 1.1), the anointed promised Seed of Abraham (Gen. 12.3, 13.15—Gal. 3.16) and the true promised Son of David (2 Sam. 7.11b-14a, Ps. 110.1-Matt. 22.44).

¹ E. W. Hengstenberg as quoted by Walter Kaiser in the forward of the 1970 edition of *Christology of the Old Testament: and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications.

TaNaK (Old Testament) Passages

One of the most difficult theological issues confronting approaching the idea of Christology is the foray into issues of the Trinity as understood by Christian writers (NT) and theologians. The difficulty of this issue arises from the very clear teaching of the TNK on the oneness of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. The classical definition of this, and the great high prayer of Judaism, is Deuteronomy 6.4.

Hear, O Israel!
YHWH our God,
YHWH is one!

ἀκούε Ἰσραηλ
κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν
κύριος εἷς ἐστίν

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
: יְהוָה אֶחָד :

The Christian approach acknowledges this affirmation of the oneness of YHWH while at the same time dealing with the passages in the TNK (and their interpretation in the NT) that hint that YHWH himself is the coming Messiah—he is both the sender and the sent one.

Walter Kaiser asks, “Does the OT contain specific and particular prophecies about the person and work of a coming Messiah? Or were these prophecies more general in their expectations, while their particulars dealt with only the historical realities of what was happening right then and there in the prophet’s own day?”²

Kaiser notes two criteria to use when dealing with the OT prophecies: “(1) the meaning of the OT references to the Messiah must reflect the authors own times and historical circumstances, and (2) the meaning must be a meaning that is reflected in the grammar and syntax [and discourse structure] of the OT text.”³ He then goes on to employ this approach, suggesting the following: 1. He proposes that the words be approached epigenetically. The search for word meaning “takes both the historical conditions in which the original word was given and its predictive particulars in equal seriousness, for it links both the text’s implantation of seminal ideas organically embedded with the one, single truth as understood by the author in his own times and circumstances. . . . [observing] the actual progress of the word between the prediction and the fulfillment as it worked out its fulfillment in the subsequent history of Israel.” He was this as “the whole point of the messianic doctrine. God was not only predicting what would happen, he was just as mightily working his promise-plan out in the everyday course of events in the arena of history in accordance with the announced word given in advance.”⁴ 2. The “words of the authors of Scripture must mean what they ordinarily meant when they were accorded their *usus loquendi*, that is, their spoken sense in similar contexts of that day. 3. This single meaning may “entail the use of the concept of ‘corporate solidarity’” i.e., ‘the *one* who represents the group and the *many* who are represented are equally a part of the same single meaning intended by the author.’” He argues that the single meaning originally meant also has a corporate and thus chrono-

² Walter Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 22-3.

³ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

logical aspect. There is both an “informing past” and a “continuing future” that have both to be observed to see the intent of the Author who has the whole of time in view when he had the authors pen the words at a time within a community. 4. As such, “The Bible is to be read with an appreciation of its wholeness, its unity, and its concept of a divine plan that is being enacted both in the immediate historical fulfillments and in a final, climatic fulfillment in the last days.”

With that he sees Three Types of Prophecies:

1. Direct Prophecies. In these the TNK author “looked directly at the messianic age, and his readers understood it as a prophecy about the Messiah.” Micah 5.2, Malachi 3.1, Zechariah 9.9.

2. Typical or Typological Prophecies. “Their immediate referent in their own day was separate from that to which their ultimate referent pointed, though they were joined as one single meaning in that they shared at least one thing in common, which was at the heart of the prediction. In this category we have persons, institutions, or events that were *divinely designated* in the OT text to be models, previews, or pictures of something that was to come in that days of the Messiah.” Exodus 25.8-9, 40—the tabernacle was a ‘pattern’ of what the real was.

3. Applications. “Here the language of the OT text is used or appropriated, but no specific prediction was intended by the OT or claimed by the NT writer.” Hosea 11.1 and Matthew 2.15. Matthew 2.23 and Isaiah 11.1.

Of these he suggests that we look for direct references and applications and for the most part try not to find too many *applications*—they should each be sought and approached with great caution as they can be the ‘most suspect.’ He says that “the most straightforward procedure will be to deal with the direct prophecies.”

While noting his caution, we need to look at some passages that note, as became clear in the NT, that the oneness of God is expressed as a triunity and that speak of the one anointed of God to be the salvation of God.

As we need to get to Erickson, this will, for the most part, be an incomplete listing of passages that demonstrate and illustrate.

The initial aspect of this is portrayed in Genesis 1. While the Hebrew word for God is shown in this chapter (and indeed the greater part of the TNK) as the masculine plural Elohim (אֱלֹהִים), it is used for all of the verses in chapter 1 of Genesis with masculine singular verb forms, except in verse 26, the verse where man is created. That verse has the masculine plural Elohim used in conjunction with the masculine plural “let us make” (נַעֲשֶׂה). The change is starkly obvious in any language and is seen by many as the first hint of the complexity of the one God who is found to be a Trinity.

This is followed in chapter 3 verse 15 with the Protoevangelium, the first gospel announcement, the first messianic prediction. In chapter 1 God in a plurality creates man (in his image and likeness) and in chapter 3 the son of the woman will save man from the serpent and his influences.

While neither of these come under Kaiser’s “direct prophecy” nomenclature, they are significant in their presentation and bear scrutiny.

Gen. 12.3, 13.15 (‘Seed of Abraham’ argument made by Paul in Gal. 3)

Numbers 24.17 gives a prophecy from the mouth of Balaam (בְּלָעַם-not my people), a foreign “diviner,” about a star that will come from Jacob.

Psalm 2.

The LORD (יְהוָה) and his anointed (מְשִׁיחוֹ) are presented as two almost equal agents against whom the kings of the earth have set themselves. The LORD’s anointed is also his King (vs. 6) and vs. 7 seems to suggest that there was a time when that king, who is also the LORD’s son is “brought forth” on a certain day, “this day.” “kiss the son (נִשְׁקוּ בֵר) is piel imperative masc. plural.

Ps. 22, Psalm 110 (cf. esp. Matt. 22.41-45), Isaiah 52.13-53.12, Daniel 7.

Erickson
Part 1, Chapter 1

The Biblical Source—Erickson says that he will “assume the orthodox or conservative view of the Bible (18).

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke)

Jesus’ Self-Designation as the Son of Man

The TNK source of this say is Daniel 7.13 (Aramaic section) where Daniel, in a vision sees “one like the son of man” (כְּבָר אֲנִיִּשׁ) being presented before “the ancient of days” (אֲנִיִּשׁ אֲנִיִּשׁ). The term is also used extensively in the book of Ezekiel as God’s designation of the prophet Ezekiel (240+ times).

As Erickson points out, it is a term used to demonstrate and bring attention to the humanity of Jesus, a reminder and pointing to the Messiah who came in the TNK as a member of the human race though sent by YHWH and despite hints at more than a singular, human nature. In many ways it points back to Genesis 1 and the creating and the making of man—of the human race, in God’s image. Though a physical, corporeal being, the man shares very significantly and vitally in the nature (ὁμοίωσιν) of his creator, in the nature of the creator of all things. Man is the one creature that the text points out shared in this. So the designation ‘son of man’, though pointing to the human nature of Jesus as the Messiah of God, cannot be made to, or thought to, exclude his divine nature.

Erickson’s three classifications could easily point to the witness of Isaiah 53 and Daniel 7. As Isaiah points out clearly, one sent from YHWH would come, not initially (but see Isaiah 53.12), to reign but to serve and to suffer. Daniel 7 serves as the TNK presentation of the “son of man” being presented before the “Ancient of Days” (vs. 22 he the term is paralleled to “Most High”) in a clearly eschatological, reigning sense—vs. 14.

Jesus’ Designation as the Son of God

Mark’s Gospel begins by designating “Jesus Christ” as the “son of God” (1.1) and includes the declaration of the centurion at the foot of the cross (15.39). So too evil spirits that Jesus cast out called him the “son of God” (3.11).

Matthew contains two instances of the disciples calling him the “son of God.” The first is when he stilled the storm (14.33) and the second is Peter’s confession (16.16). The first would have been their declaration after having witnessed his control over the forces of nature and the second would have been, I would argue, a reasoned response to his question to them based on what they had witnessed and heard to that point.

Jesus being the “son of God” is the natural lead-in, as Erickson notes, to him calling God his “father.” Erickson does note that the use of this term is more difficult to tease out as Jesus himself frequently calls God the father of his disciples. As E. notes, is the relationship of Jesus to God as father that much more unique as to be seen as distinctive from his use of the term as he talked to his disciples.

Jesus' Humanity

Erickson does note the fact that in all ways but his birth and sin Jesus lived as any other human being, with all of the pains, fatigues, and temptations that we all experience. Hebrews 4.15 notes this as one of the great advantages of Jesus as our high priest, he is like us and was subject to the same temptations to sin as all of us are, “yet without sin.”

Jesus' Sinlessness (the question of the peccability or impeccability of Christ)

There are a couple of aspects of this question that come into play when one approaches it. The first is the whole question of whether Jesus as the son of God, and as a member of the Trinity could have in fact sinned.⁵ That question gets to the heart of the nature of the incarnation and the statement of Paul in the kenosis passage in Philipians (2.6-8).

2.6	who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,	ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ
2.7	but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man,	ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος• καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος
2.8	He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.	ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.

Erickson make some interesting observations on this question. The last one he deals with concerns the actions of Jesus, or his behavior. This has to be approached from the perspective of working not to judge Jesus by our own modern societal ethics. For instance, there was a tv show that was saying it was very bad for a gay person to smoke. The show accepted homosexuality as just one other lifestyle that was completely acceptable but it was a great sin to smoke. As we approach practices or behaviors different than ours or how our society (geographic and chronologically bound) would do things. A related issue would be the instances of the TNK of YHWH ordering the genocide of peoples (Joshua 6.15-22) or Ananias and Saphira paying with their lives for lying on their pledge cards (Acts 5.1-5).

The Virgin Birth

As noted, this is one of “the more disputed areas in Gospel studies” but, so too, the witness of both Matthew and Luke are clear on this.

Luke is interesting in regard to virgin conception/birth in that he opens his gospel stating his efforts at ascertaining the truth of the matter.

⁵ This is outside of the idea that whatever God does, by the very nature of God being God, cannot be sin in that whatever he does is always correct. He is so powerful that he can do no wrong as there is no one to question him or to call into question his actions. This is different than the idea that God is so good that he *could not* do anything that was less than good by the nature of his goodness.

As far as Mark, John, and the other NT writers and their lack of treatment of the specifics of the nativity like Matthew and Luke, Erickson notes that “not every author in the NT mentions every aspect of every doctrine.”

The Resurrection

The resurrection is like the virgin birth in how it is viewed and treated by critical scholars. But, as above, the gospels writers are clear in their witness to its veracity. As Erickson notes, the disciples may have been slow at grasping the idea of the resurrection as Jesus talked about it before the crucifixion because of their conception of his mission. Like John the Baptist, they were initially and for most of the time before the crucifixion, expecting Jesus to reign as a king at that time. They kept missing his insistence on his own death and resurrection and so when he was crucified they fled and hid themselves and had to be convinced of his rising!

Gospel of John

Quick note of John's relationship to Jesus.

In the Gospels we have the following listing of the women at the foot of the cross:

Women at the Cross		
Matthew 27.56	Mark 15.40	John 19.25
among whom was	And there were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were	Therefore the soldiers did these things. But there were standing by the cross of Jesus
Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene
Mary the mother of James and Joseph	Mary the mother of James the Less (μικρο) and Joses	Mary the wife of Clopas
mother of the sons of Zebedee	Salome	His mother's sister
		His mother

This indicates that John was the son of Zebedee and Salome and that Salome was Mary's sister, making John (and James the Greater) first cousins of Jesus.

As noted, John gives his reason for his presentation of his Gospel in 20.31, "That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in his name."

In light of John's emphasis on the name of Jesus, Erickson made the very interesting notation on John's frequent use of the name wherein we have salvation, more than any other NT author.

The first chapter of John is one of the best presentations of the Christological problem—the preexistence of a corporeal being, i.e., the Deity of the man, Jesus of Nazareth. As Erickson pointed out (and we talked about last week), the passage that adds to this issue is John 8.58. That passage is closely related to John 1.1 and 1.14 in its use of terms and in its identification of who Jesus really is.

In each of the passages you have two different Greek words, which is very significant, that get translated by one English word.

^{1.1}	In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.	Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
	pasts of be	imperfects of eimi (εἶμι)

1.14	And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.	Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.
	past of become	aorist of ginomai (γίνομαι)
8.58	Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am ."	εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν Ἀβραάμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμὶ.
	past of be, present of be	aorist infinitive of ginomai (γίνομαι), present of eimi (εἰμι)

The distinction in Greek between the words and their tenses reflects in John's use of them to display the dual nature of Jesus as both the man from Nazareth and the Word of God. His use of eimi and its tenses denotes continuous existence. His employment of ginomai in both 1.14 and 8.58 and its tenses reflects the idea that someone who had not existed has in a point in time come into existence—the fleshly (σαρξ, and that is important, as noted by Erickson) Jesus of Nazareth and Abraham. At the same time, the pre-existent Son, the member of the Trinity, has always existed. John is extremely clear on this, as well as the requirement of belief in Jesus.

Good listing and explanation on the "I am sayings."

One of the interesting things about John is, despite its elevated theology, there is some material that points very clearly to the physical nature of things. Erickson mentions some. There is also in chapter 3 his mentioning of "being born of the water" which, as seen in the parallelism in the next verse, points to the physical birth, despite too many folks wanting to find baptism in the description. So too the death of Jesus. John is the one of the gospel writers who gives a more detailed description of the death of Jesus. He writes in 19.34 that blood and water poured out of his side when he was pierced by the soldier thus giving physical verification of his death from the fact that blood and water came forth showing that his blood had settled and separated.

Jesus' Self-Designation as the Son of Man
Jesus' Humanity

Acts

Erickson makes a brief note of the humanity of Jesus in the term used by the apostles, and Paul, ‘Jesus of Nazareth’—making a direct connection to a real person from a real place—a man who could be found in history.

What is emphasized in the preaching in Acts is the Resurrection of Jesus. Note Peter speaking in 2.14-39, especially 24-29, 31-32. This is in the same class as above. Pannenberg notes, “There is no justification for affirming Jesus’ resurrection as an event that really happened, if it is not to be affirmed as a historical event as such. Whether or not a particular event happened two thousand years ago is not made certain by faith but only by historical research, to the extent that certainty can be attained at all about questions of this kind.”⁶ And to this Pannenberg points to the relationship and the value of the relationship between the resurrection and the life and teachings of Jesus, in that the “meaning of the resurrection event [is the] confirmation of Jesus’ pre-Easter claim[s]. To this extent the resurrection event has retroactive power. Jesus did not simply become something that he previously had been, but his pre-Easter claim was confirmed by God.”⁷

Acts 9 and 22 are the accounts of Paul’s encounter with the risen Jesus, an encounter that will be the drive of his writings—all hinges on the fact that he found himself face to face with his risen Lord.

Pauline Writings

1 Corinthians

Now if Christ is preached,
that He has been raised from the dead,
how do some among you say
that there is no resurrection of the dead?
But if there is no resurrection of the dead,
not even Christ has been raised;
and if Christ has not been raised,
then our preaching is vain,
your faith also is vain.
Moreover we are even found false witnesses of God,
because we testified against God
that He raised Christ,
whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.
For if the dead are not raised,
not even Christ has been raised;
and if Christ has not been raised,
your faith is worthless;
you are still in your sins.

Εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς κηρύσσεται
ὅτι ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγήγερται,
πῶς λέγουσιν ἐν ὑμῖν τινες
ὅτι ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν;
εἰ δὲ ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν,
οὐδὲ Χριστὸς ἐγήγερται.
εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς οὐκ ἐγήγερται,
κενὸν ἄρα [καὶ] τὸ κήρυγμα ἡμῶν,
κενὴ καὶ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν.
εὕρισκόμεθα δὲ καὶ ψευδομάρτυρες τοῦ θεοῦ,
ὅτι ἔμαρτυρήσαμεν κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ
ὅτι ἤγειρεν τὸν Χριστόν,
ὃν οὐκ ἤγειρεν εἴπερ ἄρα νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται.
εἰ γὰρ νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται,
οὐδὲ Χριστὸς ἐγήγερται.
εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς οὐκ ἐγήγερται,
ματαία ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν,
ἔτι ἐστὲ ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν,

In this very important passage, Paul lays out the absolute value of the resurrection to the entirety of his theology—all hinges on the fact that Jesus was raised by God from the dead—confirming not only Jesus the person but also his message. He is to be believed because he was confirmed by God by being raised from the dead and that resurrection is the confirmation of our salvation (Is 53, John 3) for through Jesus the price of our sins was paid and the object of our faith is confirmed.

⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man*, 2nd ed. Translated by Lewis Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), 99.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

Colossians

He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation.

ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου,
πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως,

1.15

Gen. 1.26 comes to mind here as man was made in the ‘image’ (εἰκὼν) of God.

Side, historical usage note here—the LXX translated ‘created’ with ‘ἐποίησεν’ while Josephus, writing at the time of Colossians, uses the same word that Paul does, ‘κτίσεως’.

For by Him all things were created,
in the heavens and on earth,
visible and invisible,
whether thrones or dominions
or rulers or authorities—
all things have been created through Him and for Him.

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα
ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,
τὰ ὄρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα,
εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες
εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι•
τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται•

1.16

This is parallel to what John writes in chapter one of his gospel. Paul mentions in Galatians 1.18, 2.9, the fact that he met with Cephas, James, and John and so

He is before all things,
and in Him all things hold together.
He is also head of the body, the church;
and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
so that He Himself will come to have first place in every-
thing.
For it was the his good pleasure
for all the fullness to dwell in Him,
and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself,
having made peace through the blood of His cross;
through Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων
καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν,
καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς
ἐκκλησίας•
ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν,
ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων,
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν
πάν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι
καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν,
εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ
αὐτοῦ,
[δι’ αὐτοῦ] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς
οὐρανοῖς.

1.17

1.18

1.19

1.20

Phillipians

Have this attitude in yourselves
which was also in Christ Jesus,
who, although He existed in the **form** of God,
did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν
ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,
ὃς ἐν **μορφῇ** θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ,

2.5

2.6

Ralph Martin⁸, quoting J.B. Lightfoot, notes:

- (a) The entire phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων [in the form of God existed] points back to the time prior to the Incarnation. Thus the μορφῇ [morphe] in which Christ was refers to His pre-temporal existence.
- (b) μορφῇ and σχῆμα [schema] are compared in detail. The relevance of this discussion is seen when it is observed that σχῆμα occurs in Philippians ii.8. Lightfoot concludes that μορφῇ stands in contrast to σχῆμα as that which is intrinsic and essential stands in contrast to that which is accidental and outward. The nuance of σχῆμα suggests that which is changeable and variable, while μορφῇ denotes that specific character of an object or person, a quality of abiding and permanent worth. It is eminently suitable, therefore, to be used in the Pauline context where ‘it must apply to the attributes of the Godhead.’
- (c) After citing some parallels from Plato and Aristotle, he concludes that, in the scriptural context of Philippians

⁸ Ralph Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5-11 In recent interpretation and in the setting of early Christian worship*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983 [reprint of Cambridge University Press edition, 1967]), 100

pians ii.6, 'it (sc. the term μορφή) is used in a sense substantially the same which it bears in Greek philosophy'. With Plato, the μορφή is the impress of the 'idea' on the individual. Its meaning is not necessarily that of something which is perceptible; but equally its philosophical or metaphysical aspect is undeveloped. For Aristotle, however, the philosophical sense is pronounced and μορφή comes to take on the meaning of the essence (οὐσία-ousia) of a thing.

This point of Martin's will be one of the hinge-pins of the Christological discussions that crop up later in the conciliar discussions. The point from Plato can be found in his 'line theory' as found in his *Republic* and is contrasted with Aristotle's later break from that concept.

but emptied Himself,	ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν	2.7
taking the form of a bond-servant,	ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβών,	
being made in the likeness of men.	ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος•	
Being found in appearance as a man,	καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος	2.8
He humbled Himself by becoming obedient	ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος	
to the point of death,	μέχρι θανάτου,	
even death on a cross.	θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.	

Paul makes two important points here. Jesus Christ, the one he encountered on the road to Damascus, is the eternal God. And the eternal God lowered himself to die as one of his creatures. The two aspects of Jesus, his humanity and his deity, are sung here in this Carmen Christi, as a song of humility (notice 2.5) and exaltation for what he accomplished in his humility.

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him,	διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν	2.9
and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,	καὶ ἔχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα,	
so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow,	ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ	2.10
of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,	ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων	
and that every tongue will confess	καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται	2.11
that Jesus Christ is Lord,	ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός	
to the glory of God the Father.	εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς.	

Hebrews

Hebrews does an interesting thing right off comparing the love of God for man through Jesus and his love of the angels—he did not do for the angels what he did through us. It is man who is made “in the image and likeness of God” and man, in the person of Jesus, will be a son to God (Hebrews 1.5-14, 2.5-8, 14-18). Note this in relation to John 1.

The writer of Hebrews also makes the point that Jesus is a “priest after the order of Melkizedek.”

Gen. 14.17-20
Ps 110.4

Melchizedek. מֶלְכִי־צֶדֶק, My King is Righteous, King of Salem שָׁלֵם (root is שָׁלַם same root for שָׁלוֹם peace).
ἱερεὺς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου, priest of the most High God. Greek translation of אֱלֹהֵי־עֵלְיוֹן 'el 'elyon. A term or title recognized by both Jews and Greeks to designate the Supreme God (Acts 7.48, 16.17).

In comparing the two, Bruce argues that “it is not the type that determines the antitype, but the antitype that determines the type; Jesus is not portrayed after the pattern of Melkizedek, but Melchizedek is ‘made like unto the Son of God.’”

Revelation

Of the great verses and expanse of the Apocalypse, the passage that defines for me Jesus as Messiah, as Christ, as the True son of the Living God who came as both man and God and to reconcile the two is Rev. 5 and the identification of the Lion of Judah (Gen. 49.9-10) as the Lamb of God (Gen. 22.8, Is. 53.7, 10-12, John 1.29). This is the great Messiological dichotomy—the great Royal Ruling God became a sacrificial Lamb to redeem his sheep unto himself. His perfect justice was displayed in the perfect love where the creator became the creature to redeem that which was lost. And, contrary to much human understanding and teaching, it is the greatest humility (Philippians 2 again) that leads to the greatest exaltation. God’s truth is the one does not happen without the other as he himself demonstrated.