

Monophysitism & the Christological debates of the early church:

Lessons for Adventism today? By Alf Sanford

Introduction

What is the point? What is the relevance to our lives regarding the nature of Christ?

The grandest point, and probably the most relevant, I believe, is that They did it. The Godhead condescended to show the greatest love possible: agape love – love that would die for another man even though men were sinners (Rom 5:8) and ‘enemies of God’ (Rom 5:10). In God’s great wisdom, the plan of salvation was already devised & at the ready when Adam fell (as identified in Gen 3:15, Rev 13:8). On this point enlightened Christians must agree. Christ became man to legally reconcile the guilty to God (with Christ standing as one of the accused, the ransom Lamb for the rest of us as according to 2 Tim 1:10). As at least one commentator put it, to prevent the complete self-annihilation of mankind (citation needed), Calvary interjects a new “power” paradigm into our human trajectory: one of service, one of greatness expressed through humility, one of peace over discord.

In his book *Waiting at the Altar*, Shawn Brace opines that we (taken to mean Christians generally and) SDAs specifically, “try to sterilize Christ’s human experience” (p. 72). It might also be argued that an at-a-glance anthropological survey of history would reveal a deep-seeded need to be on the side of the greatest, biggest & toughest – of all eternity – when it comes to our profession of belief. Can’t we all appreciate having a powerful advocate? In a similarly human way, *protection*, *self-preservation*, and a basic *safety-in-numbers mindset*, it appears, drove much of the behavior of the early Church during the first millennial period surrounding monophysitism.

Monophysitism is one of the Christological positions held on the nature of Christ in the 1st millennium AD. The debate then was not in the context of pre-fall / post-fall, as perhaps Adventists have

traditionally viewed the debate, but more basically the debate then was concerned with the *physiological question of the manifestation* of the person of Christ from the Incarnation (& onward). Back then they were concerned with *was* He divine at all, and then later *how* did the human & divine natures exist in the person of Christ. Some of the points made in that early debate (which began to be addressed as early as the late 4th century) have relevance today to our views of Christ and the Gospel.

Section 1

After this rich review of the history, it seemed that it would be oversimplifying to say that the doctrinal debates of the pre-Dark Ages were driven exclusively or mainly by a temporal need for unity. Yes, Attila & his Huns had successfully threatened the Eastern Roman Empire, to the point that the Byzantines paid the Huns a yearly fee to appease Attila & stave off additional conquests attempts. And yes, the Huns had then turned their attention to the Western Roman Empire, who had looming at their doorstep other warrior barbarians (the Vandals & others). However, also at that time there was an intense interest – even by common men – in spiritual things...

As I read of that time, I imagined someone on the street asking the equivalent of “Excuse me, do you know the time?” Followed by response of, “Sure, but what do *you* think about the divinity of Mary? or, “What’s *your* take on this whole graven images thing?” One of the sources for this study, WHC Frend - an authority on the monophysite movement, also posed this thought (in his work *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*): that this intense interest by the laity in matters of doctrine was self-serving. Spiritual matters were of interest to the common man at the time in question (Frend). Frend (1972) describes that in that era, if a leader in the West could be deemed heretical & unorthodox with respect to Christianity, then rebellion – or at least removal – would be justified. This was especially relevant during a time when taxation was considered highly oppressive.

Whereas it seems that they had been much longer steeped in paganism than the West, for the early Eastern Church – where monophysitism eventually took hold – any tendency towards revolution

against the state was considered anathema. They were far more reluctant in the east to seek to stir up trouble against leadership. With that in mind, some argue that the doctrine of monophysitism – which held that Christ was of a single, newly-created nature that combined the human and the divine – was a knee-jerk reaction to perceived slights in one or more ‘railroading’ council sessions of the period. Maybe it could also be viewed, albeit more subtly, as the East’s rejection of the perceived power play of the Romish Pope Leo of that day. That said, it appears that the goal in the East, if not more than in the West, was to avoid descension whenever possible. The resultant discord of any such profession of disloyalty to leadership would have been considered in the Eastern empire to be a work of the devil.

It also appears that in the East they were less inclined to compromise truth for the sake of political expediencies. It seems to me from the study that for the clergy & laity of the Eastern empire, agreeing to disagree, and coming back around to a topic, seemed to be an adequate approach with respect to matters of doctrine, especially Christology. Frend (1972) is clear that the movement did not have as its primary or secondary motivation even a hint of disunity from Byzantine leadership; it would be side effect, if anything. Contrast this with the spirit of haste that seemed to dominate in the Western empire, combined with the invention to overcome a lack of consensus with respect to the nature of Mary (this bears further study and confirmation), which was one of the other issues that they’d dealt with somewhat concurrently.

Let’s ask more about the role of the Huns...History is curt regarding the impact of Attila & the Huns. Here we see a map of Attila’s empire (Appendix A) – and though large, it paled in comparison to that of Genghis Khan’s; and, as World Book is quick to point out, the Hun empire was shorter-lived, too (World Book, 2009). As Adventists, with our enlightened understanding of world history (especially through the lens of prophecy), the question begs, “Why would God allow Attila onto the scene for what appears primarily, if not only, to antagonize the nascent movement of Christians?” Could it have been a divinely appointed test to see if the body of new believers & its leadership would be moved to put their

faith first & only in God? Or to see if they would follow the example of their Jewish spiritual forebears and seek comfort in physical might? It must have been a tough time in which to live and govern, I'm sure.

We can discern, along with urgency in some of the early council debates, a pervasive spirit of domination, as opposed to one of longsuffering & understanding. In the best light it appears that they were seeking to circle the wagons & protect the nascent empire to stave off future attacks & attempted conquests. The earthly calculus would be: if everyone is on the same page, there exists some kind of 'safety in numbers' or solidarity, even if a false sense of security.

A.T. Jones in *Ecclesiastical Empire* (1901) writes of doctrinal wavering with respect to graven images, which (as we know) ended on the side of error for that church (the plain truth of which threatened small businesses in parts of the local economy), and also of witness badgering on the stand at least at one of the councils by one clergy of another to save his own office or position. You can read in *Ecclesiastical Empire* the sordid details; suffice it to say that passions seemed to be always high in the various discussions on doctrine.

Along with different vendettas, grievances, and an ever-growing power jockeying by the then Roman See over the other bishops of the period, there was ever-simmering in the background that pressure of the laity, ready to throw in their lot against leadership under the cry of 'heretic' (Frend, 1972). At the councils, it's described that the label of heretic was thrown around like something of a scarlet letter that bore with it the possible accompaniment of death – including, in one related case of the period, at the hands of an incited mob of thuggish monks (Jones, 1901; Knight, 2012).

{High passions reigned at the councils of that early time...however, it appears, this was due primarily to vendetta, grievances, self-preservation of personal office and power plays, along

with the ever-simmering pressure of the laity's constant glare in the background. Bribery, witness badgering, assault, assassination attempts, et al. were noted}

Section 2

The exorbitant taxation in the Eastern empire was driven at least in part by the protection payment required of Attila & the Huns, apparently for forgiveness of an assassination plot on Attila, orchestrated by one of the emperor's high court, a well-ranked eunuch by the name of Chrysaphius (Wikipedia, 2017). It's believed that the ransom paid was far greater than any cost would have been to wage war against the Hun antagonists. On the other hand, personal enrichment & self-preservation of office also drove clergy compliance at the various councils of the day (Ephesus, Chalcedon, etc.), which is to say that within the grander context of the "safety-in-numbers" mentality, self-interests loomed large in the swaying of the ecclesiastical parties who were convened at the ecumenical councils for various purposes & motives; motives which appear only somewhat secondary to the surface matter of hammering out religious doctrine. Large bribes of gold involving church officials, apparently, also played a part in this historical period as well. It appears that the it was 'see it my way on this, and thereby help me to maintain or enlarge my office,' as opposed to does this position line up aright with "what doth saith the Lord?"

But to prevent going too far down any additional conspiratorial rabbit holes, here is a pretty good summary of the genesis of the instigation that led to the creation of the monophysite doctrinal position within the Eastern part of the Empire (The Reasons, 2017). Nestorius was archbishop of Constantinople, and it was with him that the original nature of Christ debate finds some of its roots (at least as pertaining to monophysite doctrine). He was on record as warning that the new believer Gentiles stood at risk of being scandalized by calling Mary the 'Mother of God' and that, "Since St. Mary did not give birth to God 'strictly speaking,' she should not be called 'Mother of God' (Theotokos)" but rather "Mother of Christ" (Christotokos), so that the Gentiles "do not make her [into] a pagan goddess"

and be scandalized. With this profoundly unpopular position held a strike against him, in the Christological debate Nestorius was accused, by the later sainted Cyril, of dividing Christ into 2 persons, where the Divine conjoined Himself to an already existing human body. (Dyrness, Karkkainen & Martinez, 2008; Chapman, 1911; The Reasons, 2017)

Nestorius was concerned over the increasing veneration of Mary who was at that time called “Theotokos” or Mother of God. He was concerned that this term came dangerously close to venerating Mary as a goddess rather than just the human vessel who brought Christ into the world and suggested [instead] the term “Christotokos” or “Christ-bearer.” This brought him into conflict with several other prominent theologians of the time, especially Cyril of Alexandria, who declared Nestorius a heretic. He sought to defend himself at the First Council of Ephesus in 431, convened by the Byzantine Emperor in Ephesus – a special seat for the veneration of Mary. Apparently, the Emperor supported Nestorius whereas Pope Celestine 1 supported Cyril. The Council started their deliberations concerning Nestorius and declared him a heretic before the eastern church representatives could arrive. After their late arrival, the Eastern Church was furious that Nestorius had already been tried and condemned, and responded by forming their own judicial unit at which Cyril was found guilty and deposed while Nestorius was found innocent. Reaching an impasse, both sides appealed to Emperor Theodosius who – in a politically correct decision – found both Nestorius and Cyril to be guilty and ordered them both into exile. Nestorius was sent into exile in Egypt where he lived until 451 a monastery subject to the rule of Cyril. In Egypt, he strenuously defended his orthodoxy and refused to be silenced. Unfortunately, during the Council of Calcedon in 451, he was formally condemned and lost the political battle. However, the eastern portion of the Church in Eastern Mesopotamia and Persia, refused to accept this condemnation, leading the Western churches to refer to those in the East as “Nestorian,” even though the eastern churches never really viewed Nestorius as authoritarian. Meanwhile, events proved much kinder to Cyril who eventually was able to bribe various officials and allowed to return to Byzantium where he continued to influence church policy.

(<http://thereasons.org/churches/catholic-church/eastern-catholic-churches/nestorian-churches/>)

While the East did not consider Nestorius authoritative, the Monophysite position was something of a later response to the West’s “2 Christs” accusation, as well as a progression of thought, as the “debate” thundered on over the years. From Christian apologist Matt Slick (n.d), this definition of monophysitism includes his commentary of possible interest to the SDA pre-fall/post-fall debate:

Monophysitism is an error concerning the nature of Christ that asserts Jesus had only one nature and not two, as is taught in the correct doctrine of the hypostatic union: Jesus is both God and man in one person. In monophysitism, the single nature was divine and not

human [*or his human nature was absorbed into his divinity*]. It is sometimes referred to as Eutychianism, after Eutyches 378-452; but there are slight differences. Monophysitism arose out of a reaction against Nestorianism which taught Jesus was two distinct persons instead of one. Its roots can even be traced back to Apollinarianism.

Monophysitism was confined mainly to the Eastern church and had little influence in the West. In 451, the Council of Chalcedon attempted to establish a common ground between the [monophysites] and the orthodox, but it did not work and divisions arose in the Eastern church which eventually excommunicated the monophysitists in the 6th century.

The denial of the human nature of Christ is a denial of the true incarnation of the Word as a man. Without a true incarnation there can be no atonement of sin for mankind since it was not then a true man who died for our sins.

It was condemned as heresy at the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680-681.

(Slick, CARM - "monophysitism")

Of possible significant import to the SDA pre-fall/ post-fall debate might be Slick's (a professed Calvinist's) assertion that: "The denial of the human nature of Christ is a denial of the true incarnation of the word as a man. Without a true incarnation there can be no atonement of sin for mankind since it was not then a true man who died for our sins." Appollinarianism held that the divine nature of Christ eventually overtook & replaced the human one. (Slick, n.d.)

The monophysite doctrine was later modified to become what is known as Monothelitism, the doctrine of one will, which emerged in Armenia around 629 AD, shortly after Muhammed comes on the scene with his revelations. This view – unlike dyothelitism – held that Christ had two natures but only one will {compare miaphysitism}. This popular Monothelitism belief was short-lived and later declared heretical (Wikipedia – Monothelitism, 2017).

Appendix B shows the Nestorian position - the Monophysite precursor - depicted pictorially. From this vantage point, it's easy to see how Nestorius came to be accused of creating two Christ's, along with this definition of a branch encompassing Nestorianism called Dyophysitism (The Reasons, 2017):

{Nestorius believed in a form of the theological doctrine known as "[dyophysitism](#)" which holds that Christ's human and Divine natures are two separate, *loosely connected* natures

co-existing in one individual (“hypostasis”). A simple definition of Nestorianism might be, “Jesus Christ [the human], who is not identical with the Son [the divine] but personally united with the Son, who lives in him, is one hypostasis and one nature: human.” Churches which followed Nestorianism (the Nestorian Schism) lived primarily under Persian rule and for a time had great expansion in the Eastern world; there are monuments to their presence still extant in China. However, their numbers are few today, and are divided into three main groups: the Chaldaean Catholic Church (which is in Communion with Rome and is considered an “Eastern Catholic Church”) [and] is the most numerous of the three major Nestorian factions, [which also include] the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Ancient Church of the East.

In comparison, we see the archimandrite Eutyches and his proposal regarding the nature of Christ. Nestorianism held that there was both a divine and a human person involved in the person of Christ. At the time, as noted earlier, this led to a “2 Christ’s” scandal where Nestorius was accused by his attackers of creating two separate Christs, the man vessel born of Mary and the inhabiting Divinity, the Son of God. Eutychianism swung the pendulum the other way – with divinity consuming his humanity. Eutyches is depicted in the sources as something of a defender of Nestorius. {Wikipedia, 2017}.

We can see, if only subtly, not just a sterilizing of Christ’s human experience, but a distancing of our Lord – away from us & our human experiences as tempted, vulnerable human beings – this is at best done (it seems) to explain away what the period had chosen not to embrace: Paul’s messages regarding Christ’s human nature. His writings on the subject permeate the New Testament (ratified no later than 397 AD). Instead of waiting for more light, the western leaders of the time devised, as done with the Immaculate Conception contrivance which would have the cascading effect of clouding instead of clarifying the mystery of the Incarnation. From the Samuel House Ministries, here we see the humanness of Christ as defined in Greek is “sarx”:

Four basic Greek meanings of sarx...

Outline of biblical usage of ‘sarx’:

- I. *flesh (the soft substance of the living body, which covers the bones and is permeated with blood) of both man and beasts*
- II. *the body*
 - A. the body of a man
 - B. used of natural or physical origin, generation or relationship
 1. born of natural generation

- C. the sensuous nature of man, "the animal nature"
 - 1. without any suggestion of depravity
 - 2. the animal nature with cravings which incite to sin
 - 3. the physical nature of man as subject to suffering
- III. *a living creature (because possessed of a body of flesh) whether man or beast*
- IV. *the flesh, denotes mere human nature, the earthly nature of man apart from divine influence, and therefore prone to sin and opposed to God*

(www.christcrucified.info/pdf/The%20Biblical%20Meaning%20of%20Flesh.pdf)

Various biblical uses of the word *sarx* include John 1:14, Acts 2:17, Rom 7:25, Rom 8:3, Gal 5:17, Eph 5:29, 1 Pet 3:18, 4:1-2, 1 John 4:2-3, 2 John 2:7 (also see Appendix C).

As a dear preacher friend shared, Christ was born 'born again', which should be taken to mean that Jesus, from his earthly birth onward, had no need to come to God for forgiveness (in contrast to the rest of [fallen] humanity before & since Calvary)...but HE had the *very* need – as have we – to continually submit to the Father for the power to do his will.

Section 3

In the SDA 27 Beliefs chapter "God the Son", in the section *Jesus Christ Is Truly Man*, we read that "He [Christ] took the nature of man in its fallen state, bearing the consequences of sin, [though] not its sinfulness. He was one with the human race, except in sin." (General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, 1988). A later section *The Union of the Two Natures* states: "The person of Jesus Christ has two natures: divine and human. He is the God-man...In Jesus, these two natures were merged into one person." (General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, 1988) And finally, from the subsection *He was the second Adam*: "... 'Christ's humanity was not the Adamic humanity, that is, the humanity of Adam before the fall; nor fallen humanity, that is, in every respect the humanity of Adam after the fall. It was not the Adamic, because it had the innocent infirmities of the fallen [hunger, fatigue, pain, etc.]. It was not the fallen, because it had never descended into moral impurity. It was, therefore, most literally our humanity, but without sin.'" (General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, 1988)

Our SDA doctrine appears to hold the view that Christ's divine nature could not die. As I discussed my research this summer with a fellow SDA, I shared with him that the Death at Calvary must have been complete to be considered an actual (sacrificial) death. Additionally, my thoughts expanded to consider that perhaps Christ did not die the second death but rather He took our penalty of the second death (thanks Jerry!), in His dying a *Thanatos* or sleep death. We may only know the truth on the other side of Heaven, but one thing is certain: Calvary fulfilled the requirements of the Father, with Christ as his Lamb. Amen!

Official SDA doctrine holds that Christ's divine nature could not die - We don't say at funerals "What nature died?", but rather "Who died?" Further, the Death must have been complete, or then it wasn't a death. He is not dead now, praise God - which ever nature!! Calvary met the requirement! And in a way that no other man ever could have!

Aside from Pelagius and Apollinaris, it appears that most others were splitting hairs, posturing, or even usurping the opponent's position when the other was out of the way or when convenient to do so. As mentioned previously, Nestorius' main detractor was the now canonized Cyril, who also taught a distinction between the human & divine natures of Jesus. Regardless of the answer, with respect to the nature of Christ, the condescension, the death & the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ clearly should have been the point.

Unabashed acceptance & preaching of this truth to non-believers, including and especially our Muslim brethren is sure to resonate as they see the agape love of an almighty Allah who loved his creation so much so to perform such a premeditated act of sacrifice & reconciliation. It will resonate with them & others as Calvary clarifies the purpose of the Jewish temple economy up through Jesus & Golgotha. It will resonate as it points to the falling out-of-favor of Jews as the Chosen people at the

stoning of Stephen, evinced by the subsequent sacking of Jerusalem and the growth of Christianity (which started as a strain of Judaism), and as history portrays a nomadic Jewish people, up through the forming of the Israeli nation.

Probably the most interesting of the positions found was put forward by the theologian Pelagius, who argued that there was no change in Adam's nature after he sinned and that the same power to choose (that he had before the Fall) we, too, possess (Wikipedia, 2017). Apparently, there is growing interest today in revisiting the possible merits of Pelagianism. As my wife asked, "then why would Jesus have to come?", I supposed the argument would be to: 1) keep man from obliterating the entire human race, by interjecting a new paradigm into humanity – one of the stronger serving the weak (as opposed to mere domination), and 2) to still complete the plan of redemption and reconciliation. As our friend Bob Hunsaker shared at this summer's conference, true is the Ellen White notion that the researcher is indeed repaid for his study of this rich & deep topic...even if with deeper contemplations than had at the onset.

While preparing one day for this presentation, as I explained to Lanai the warring of the spirit & the flesh, I told her of the lack of easy access to Bibles (until Gutenberg in 1440) and our 'debt' to Adam for setting us at enmity with God, and by his becoming one who disobeyed and by his doing so becoming one no longer fully trustworthy, at least to the point of being no longer worthy of continued access to the Tree of Life & God's presence. While perhaps subtle or moot for Pelagius (an ascetic moralist who opposed predestination & asserted strongly free will), that change in Adam has made all the difference, especially since Adam's awareness of his difference and his subsequent eviction from the Garden.

Pelagius, who lived from 360-420 A.D.,

- Espoused that there was no change in Adam's nature after he sinned and that the same power to choose (that he had before the Fall) we, too, possess

- Accused (by Augustine and others) of denying the need for divine aid in performing good works

Appollinarianism held that there were two natures involved, and that the divine nature, over time, overtook the human nature completely within the person of Christ. From this, different views emerged. Eutyches' Christological position that there was a new nature (never-before-seen then or since) created in the unification of the divine with the human placed an uneven emphasis on the divine nature (Wikipedia – Miaphysitism). Dyophysitism – a response to Eutychianism – distinguished person versus nature, holding that He was two natures in one person. Docetism holds that Christ only appeared to be human. Compare that with a popular view of some Muslims that Christ [His divine nature, I suppose] did not die on the Cross but was raised from the Cross just prior to the point of death, or that another (Simon the Cyrenian) took His place on Golgotha, from the much earlier Basilides (pronounced like 'facilities'), circa 130 AD. Adoptionism held the view that Christ was a man chosen by God.

Unexhaustive summary of views

- **Pelagianism** – there was no change in Adam's nature after the Fall
- **Apollinarianism** – the divine nature of Christ eventually overtook & replaced the human one
- **Nestorianism** – there was both a divine and a human person involved in the person of Christ (accused of devising two Christs)
- **Eutychianism** – Christ's divinity consumed his humanity, "as the ocean consumes a drop of vinegar"
- **Monophysitism** – Christ was divine in nature only
- **Dyophysitism** – a complete & perfect unity of the two natures in one hypostasis (cf. miaphysitism: Christ is both human & divine, but in one nature)

All the confusion/ variety of views back then was some 1,000+ years before another Catholic priest blessed humanity with the understanding of genetics that we accept as science today. Had Mendel's theories been contemporaneous with that period around the initiation of the Christological debate, perhaps a more patient, spirit-led study of the topic would have prevailed with a glimmer of hope for truth in sight? Without the insight of genetics, it seems they went around in a spiral only to get closer & closer to the unknowable mystery. Positions went from Christ as not fully divine – the Council of Nicea

then definitively declared Him “God the Son become human” (Wikipedia - Monothelitism), through the various iterations to today’s position in the west that the two natures joined in a single hypostasis. Another view from today – miaphysitism, of the present-day Oriental Orthodox Christian churches – holds that “after the union, Christ is in one theanthropic (human-divine) nature generated from the union of two natures, possessing characteristics of both the divine and human characters (Wikipedia – Miaphysitism). Would Gregor Mendel have broken away and signed on with the current Eastern view?

Some Christological Viewpoints Today

Western View

- Dyophysitism – the two natures joined in a single hypostasis
 - Hypostasis - the single person of Christ, as contrasted with his dual human and divine nature
- present day Eastern Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Catholic Churches, Anglican Church, Old Catholic Church, and various other Christian denominations

Eastern View

- Miaphysitism - holds that “after the union, Christ is in one theanthropic (human-divine) nature generated from the union of two natures, possessing characteristics of both the divine and human characters
- present day Oriental Orthodox Christian churches (Wikipedia – Miaphysitism).

Section 4

Was the lock-step groupthink mentality that pervaded church leadership at that time the same that led to the Dark Ages, including the Spanish Inquisition? Where men thought they were advancing the cause of Christ, were they doing it more harm...and for generations to come? While the early Church was not ready to receive a larger following in the form of their Abrahamic Muslim brethren, contrast the oppression in modern day Islamic nations that comes from a system of forced allegiance to a faith (and death for converts who leave), which brings into stark view the merits not only of democracy...but also of freedom of conscience, in general. As my 10-year-old replied once in our conversation on the topic: “If you don’t have freedom of conscience, you don’t have you!”

The quest for truth is vital, if for no other reason than opposing *ideas* must be free to war, so that we might have freedom of conscience & peace. Peace will come as the victor is gracious in 'victory', even nurturing; and as the 'loser' is able to be mature enough to see error and adjust (resisting the urge to play the 'God is no respecter of persons' card in defeat). [For example, Calvinism predestination is conceptually right, but spiritually wrong (exclusivist); we should be on guard against a spirit that begrudgingly concedes.] Particularly in times of uncertainty, it is the Holy Spirit's work to lead. As we continue to champion freedom of conscience on the world stage, the need exists to be ever-gracious in victory, and humble & teachable when we are shown truth by others.

In all, the monophysitism that the early Muslims found in neighboring Abyssinia (modern day Ethiopia) was Christianity of an imperial nature, with that region viewed by skeptical Arab neighbors as having lost their freedom to the Byzantine Empire. Further study might confirm Armstrong's view of a spiritual colonialism of that period and the desire to band together to fortify against the invaders of the north, but much of the Christianity of northern Africa, where monophysitism had its strongest roots, eventually gave way – as did the Middle East and the rest of northern Africa – to Islam, with its own promises of peace, unity, egalitarianism (the growing economic divide of then urban Mecca withstanding). Safety – particularly from the harsh nomadic desert life that many had known – was undoubtedly another attraction for Islam's early adherents. For instance, non-lethal raiding for survival was somewhat akin to sport in Arabia, Armstrong writes, until Islam's establishment (Armstrong, 1992).

Shared in the PowerPoint presentation version of this work is Business Insider' depicting of the progression of Christianity & the other major world religions. They can be viewed at these links (with or without sound): a) <https://youtu.be/BJ0dZhHccfU> b) <http://www.businessinsider.com/maps-religion-spread-throughout-world-2017-7>.

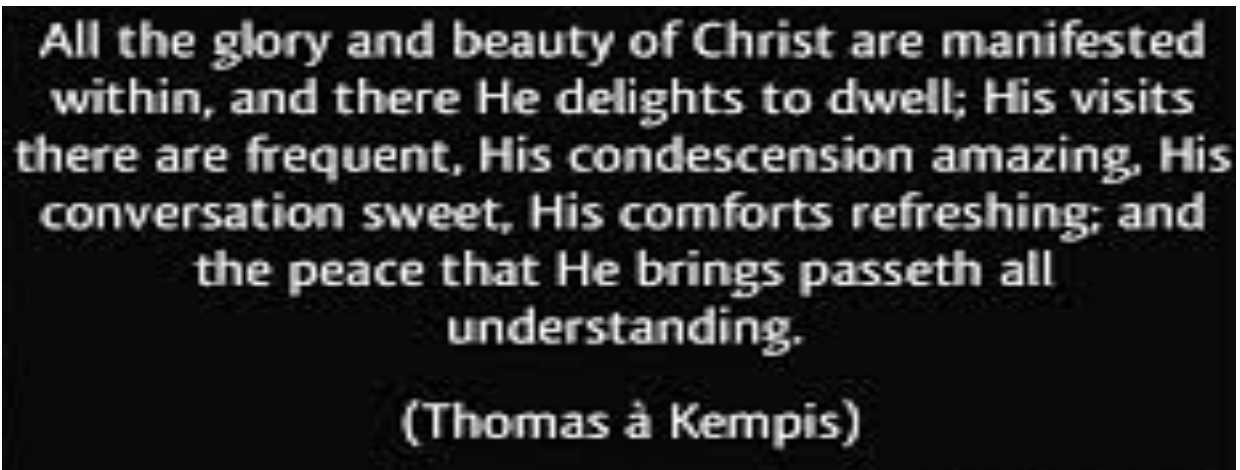
We're told that the Jews the pre-Islamic Arabs encountered "were practically indistinguishable from their Arab pagan neighbors and their religion was of a somewhat rudimentary nature" {Armstrong, 1992}. Clearly, the power of God had left them. However, Christianity was similarly viewed with skepticism and as another means of imperial control by either Persia or Byzantium. We see a deflated Judaism and an embattled early papal Rome at the time God speaks to Muhammad, who was a reluctant prophet at first, waiting a full 2 years in quiet before being compelled to share his revelation to any other outside of a handful of close confidants (Armstrong, 1992). Later, it seems that when Islam's apostasy begins, we see the Mongol Empire burst on the scene, then & since holding the record as the largest land empire in all of world history. [The record holder, that is, until Christ establishes his kingdom in the Earth made new. Amen!]

Conclusion

The nature of Christ has been hotly debated through history in the early church, acting as a leading wedge schism between the Eastern orthodox division of the early Christian Church & the west, which would soon become the Church of Rome. As with other issues of doctrine, they rushed to 'resolve' the debate, leading to no more definitive truth than I and others have found through our personal study of the rich nature of Christ topic.

Here is just a taste of the historical views that have come into play since the church's early forming, including, again, what is currently a renewed interest in the Pelagian idea that there is no difference in the pre- and post-fall nature of Adam. Even within this hopefully illuminating historical context, while our Christological debate might continue into the foreseeable future, it must not be lost sight of the fact that for many non-believers the simple argument itself of God made manifest – living in the flesh, on earth – can be the greatest faith barrier. "Can it be true that God actually came down here to be with men, and for me?" might be an unbeliever's attitude. Let alone the question of the method of His asexual entry into this world, or what type of man was He?

Could it be that the masses outside of the Abrahamic faiths await answers to which they can truly relate? Is this the line of debate that will be more profitable for our world church within the civilized but unchurched populations of the world (as opposed to pet areas of interest focused on for so long)? Hopefully you've been inspired to know more about this rich topic for yourself.



Epilogue

Pelagius believed we have the same power to choose as did Adam in the Garden. Adam was indeed free to choose: to doubt, to sin. Christ's role "from the foundation of the world" saved Adam, and all since him, from the condemnation of the wages of sin as death.

The object lesson of the sacrificial service introduced by Moses (much later than Eden), displayed for the adherents, and any lookers on, the pain & ugliness of sin. The sacrifice of Christ, justifying all men, earned us 'higher wages'; the wages of sin are now doubt, and that doubt is a wedge that Satan can exploit mightily to cause men to lose all hope and all confidence in the significance of a risen Savior.

His Death saved us from the past, but His resurrection ushered us into the future. The old man, all old things are cast away, if one chooses for it to be so...we are all born 'old men' who are at enmity with God, but we can come away from the lineage of Adam #1 and become like Adam #2...via the

grafting of Christ in our lives. No longer blaming but rather loving & covering; not condemning but patiently & tenderly reproofing.

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Appendix

Appendix A.i – The Hun Empire & Its Subject Tribes at the Time of Attila (www.ancient-origins.net)



Appendix A.ii – Empire of Attila, King the Huns (www.globalsecurity.org)



Appendix B – Nestorian Theology Representing Separate Divine and Human Natures within one Person
(<http://thereasons.org/churches/catholic-church/eastern-catholic-churches/nestorian-churches/>)



Appendix C – Some biblical uses of “sarx”:

John 1:14	And the Word was made <u>flesh</u> , and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace & truth.
Acts 2:17-21	And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all <u>flesh</u> : and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 18 and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy: 19 and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: 20 the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: 21 and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.
Romans 7:25	I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the <u>flesh</u> serving the law of sin.
Romans 8:3-4	(All instances of flesh in the passage) 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the <u>flesh</u> , God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful <u>flesh</u> , and for sin, condemned sin in the <u>flesh</u> : 4 that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the <u>flesh</u> , but after the Spirit.
Galatians 5:17	(Both instances of flesh in the verse) For the <u>flesh</u> lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the <u>flesh</u> : and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Ephesians 5:29-30	(Both instances in the passage) 29 For no man ever yet hated his own <u>flesh</u> ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of the body, of his <u>flesh</u> , and of his bones.
1 Peter 3:18-20	18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the <u>flesh</u> , but quickened by the Spirit: 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.
1 John 4:2-3	2 Hereby knew ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the <u>flesh</u> is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.
Ephesians 2:14-17*	14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his <u>flesh</u> the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 And came and preached peace to you which ere afar off, and to them that were nigh.

*Jones (Consecrated Way, p. 51) may take liberty that is not rightful to do...Christ made "in himself of twain [Jew & Gentile] one new man, so making peace; [v. 16] And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby..."