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THE PROBLEMS OF CONVENTIONAL CHRISTOLOGY

The problem of Christology, narrowly defined, concerns the relation of the divinity and the humanity in the Christ—the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth—a subject obviously at the very center of Christianity. The problem has both historical and logical dimensions. The problem of Christology was brought into sharp relief at the council of Nicea (C.E. 325) where Christ was incorporated into the Trinity and made “one substance” with God the Father—meaning essentially that Christ was not only God in every sense that the Father is God, but also that there is only one God in the sense demanded of metaphysical monotheism. The problem became very clear: How could a person who walked around Palestine in the first century C.E. be identified with God the Creator? The traditional explanation—that Christ is one person with two natures, one divine and one human—was adopted at Chalcedon (C.E. 451) and remained the consensus Christian position until the nineteenth century when developments in biblical scholarship and logic pointed to numerous deficiencies in the traditional formulation. The traditional explanations leave a lot to be desired both in terms of logical consistency and of historical adequacy.