

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christology, Session 2, Patristic Christology, Part 1, Before Nicaea

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christology. This is session 2, Patristic Christology, Part 1, Before Nicaea.

We continue our course on Christology by studying Patristic Christology, and I want to acknowledge a tremendous debt to my friend Stephen Wellum's *God the Son Incarnate*.

Christological formulations before the Council of Nicaea in 325. Thus, our dates are like 100 to 325 AD. Aloys Grillmeier observes, quote, that no epic of Christology displays such numerous and so different currents of thought as the second century, close quote.

At first glance, this may seem disconcerting, but it should not surprise us for two reasons. First, we must remember that even though the New Testament was written by this time, it was not circulating as an entire canon. Second, as the church spread and became universal throughout the Roman Empire, it not only faced opposition in terms of persecution but also challenges from within.

Already in the New Testament, even when the Apostles existed, we have those from within the church who preached the gospel for their own profit and distorted it. But now, as people from biblically illiterate and alien worldview backgrounds are converted, they inevitably import a lot of baggage, which increases the danger of syncretism. Many who thought they were proclaiming Christ were, in reality, obscuring the very gospel they sought to proclaim.

Jeremy Jackson suggests that what unites all heresies is the denial of Christ and his work. As we embark on describing various false views of who Jesus is, we must keep this in mind. At the heart of the gospel is Jesus, and at the heart of all heresy is a misunderstanding and or denial of him.

Why is this so? Probably because the idea of salvation by God's sovereign grace, achieved by the incarnate Son, who lived a life we could not live and died as our penal substitute, is offensive to rebellious human beings. It removes from us any ability to contribute to our own salvation, and it drives us to raise the empty hands of faith and to receive what God has graciously and powerfully done for us in Christ. If we want to distinguish true Christianity from false, in any era we must ask, who do you say Jesus is and does? That response is critical for theology and ethics.

In this period of time, 100 to 325, there were two ways in which people departed from the biblical Jesus. They denied and or minimized either his deity, his humanity, or his humanity. Interestingly, unlike our own day, the first heresy associated with Gnosticism didn't deny his deity but denied his humanity.

Heresies associated with Judaism, monarchian, Jewish heresies, monarchian heresies, and Gnostic heresies are our outline at this point. Jewish heresies. The first number of Christological heresies is associated with Judaism.

In the New Testament era, the Jewish community, for the most part, rejected the deity of Christ and denied he was the Messiah promised by the Old Testament. From the second until the early fifth century, there existed a Jewish Christian group known as the Ebionites, a group associated with the continuation of the Judaistic opponents of Paul. This group denied Jesus' virgin conception along with his deity.

In their view, Jesus was an ordinary man who possessed unusual but not supernatural gifts. He distinguished himself from others by a strict observance of the law, and the Ebionites taught that due to his observance of the law, Christ, in quotation marks, descended on Jesus by the Spirit of God at his baptism, which meant that God's presence and power were him in unique ways, primarily in terms of influence. Near the end of his life, Christ, conceived in Messianic terms, withdrew from Jesus, thus his cry of abandonment on the cross.

There were other Jewish sects that we don't need to mention at this time. Monarchian heresies have to do with monarchianism. A second variety of Christological Trinitarian heresies was associated with monarchianism.

This position rightly sought to preserve monotheism, and thus the divine unity or monarchia, but to the exclusion of the full and co-equal deity of the Son and Spirit. This exclusion of the deity of the Son was done in one of two ways, both of which departed from biblical teaching. The first way was the position of adoptionism, or dynamic monarchianism.

In order to preserve the divine unity, this view argued Jesus was not God the Son. Instead, the logos, a kind of power or reason identified and consubstantial with the Father, but not a distinct person, came upon the man Jesus at his baptism. Prior to Jesus' baptism, he was wholly human, but as a reward for his exceptional moral virtue, Jesus was adopted as God's Son and empowered by God and thus able to perform his many miracles.

In this sense, Jesus was deified by virtue of a received power, not because of any supposed equality of nature with the Father. Rather, it was believed that God could not suffer. Because of that, this position maintains that the logos flew back to God before Jesus died on the cross, thus the explanation for Jesus' cry of abandonment.

Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch around 200 to 275, was a famous proponent of this view. His views were rejected by the church in the third century. In the next century, Paul's views influenced later figures such as Lucian of Antioch and his pupil Arius, who denied the deity of the Son.

Over a millennium later, this view was taught by Socinianism and Unitarianism, and today, many within the liberal tradition of the church are adoptionistic in their Christology. Adoptionism, or dynamic monarchism, get it? Dynamic? It enabled Jesus to do these miracles and so forth. It dynamized him, if you will.

The second way monarchism developed and excluded the deity of the Son was by excluding his personal distinctiveness from the Father, and it's called modalism. Both of these monarchisms have this in common. They believe in monotheism, and they're determined to defend it, and that's where they have to deny the deity of Christ, they think, to preserve the unity of the Godhead.

Modalism was also known as Sabellianism, after Sabelius. It was a very influential view in the early church. It had the twin convictions that God is one, there's that again, and that Jesus is God, yet modalists were uncomfortable with Tertullian's suggestion that the Father and the Son shared the same substance, arguing that this entailed bi-theism.

So, they conceived of the Father, Son, and Spirit as modes, hence the name modalism, in which God manifested himself. They suggested God manifested himself differently in each of the three phases of world history. In the Old Testament, God was Father and Creator.

In the Gospel period, he was the Son, Redeemer. And since Pentecost, he's the Spirit, Sanctifier. In this way, they denied the personal distinctions between the Father, Son, and Spirit within the Godhead.

Modalism affirmed the full deity of Christ, yet it denied his distinct person within the Godhead. One disastrous implication of modalism is that the events of redemptive history become a charade. Not being a distinct person, the Son cannot really represent us to the Father nor accomplish a substitutionary atonement on our behalf.

Modalism is necessary docetic, teaching that Christ was human in appearance only, unless one affirms, which some modalists did, that the Father suffered on the cross. This is the heresy known as patripassionism, the Father suffering on the cross since the Son is not actually distinct from the Father. The difference between orthodoxy and modalism is not the use of the word mode to describe the persons.

We could say God exists eternally in three modes, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The difference is orthodoxy says God exists in three modes simultaneously. Right now, God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Modalism, Sabellianism, or Oneness Pentecostalism is modalistic and says God exists in three persons successively. Get it? Not simultaneously. In both of these monarchian views, the unity of God was maintained, but the deity of the Son was denied.

And as a result, Jesus was viewed either as an empowered man, dynamic Monarchianism, or a mere manifestation of God, but not the God the Son incarnate, modalistic Monarchianism. Those are heresies associated with Judaism and Monarchianism. Now, Gnostic heresies.

Without question, the most serious distortion of biblical thought during this time was the heretical worldview of Gnosticism and its Christological counterpart, Docetism. It was very influential indeed. Gnosticism was part of a large and complex religious and philosophical movement that swept through the Hellenistic world at the beginning of the second century.

It was based on the Platonic dualism of matter and spirit. Gnostics argued that the material world was inherently evil, while the spirit world was potentially good. In addition, Gnosticism offered people detailed secret knowledge, Greek *gnosis*, hence Gnosticism, and Gnostic, secret knowledge of reality, claiming to know and to be able to explain things which ordinary people, including Christians, were ignorant of.

It divided humans into various classes, and only those in the highest and most spiritual class could attain this secret knowledge. It thus was elitist. At every point, Gnosticism was an alien to Christianity, and if accepted or mixed with biblical faith, the truth of the gospel would have been destroyed.

For example, Gnostics viewed God as one, yet remote and unknowable, wholly other, and thus removed from this fallen material universe, which he did not create. Some in Gnostic thought. Since, in Gnostic thought, there's a distance between God and the world, the gap between God and the world is filled by intermediaries, a whole host of them.

In fact, it was one of these intermediaries, a lesser power or God, known as the demiurge, who created this fallen material, fallen universe, including human beings. When it comes to humans, we're comprised of the same spiritual substance that God is, but we have become trapped in physical bodies, which are like tombs that we must escape. Our fall into sin is not a historic fall.

Rather, it's identical to our fall into matter and thus becoming trapped in our physical bodies. In this way, creation and fall coincide due to the work of the demiurge. Therefore, in Gnosticism, sin is viewed as the alienation of our soul from the true God, while we exist in our physical bodies.

As long as our souls are trapped in physical bodies, and materiality will be subject to so-called sin, salvation is an escape from the bondage of material existence and a journey back to the home from which our souls had fallen. This possibility is initiated by the Great Spirit, God, who wishes to draw back into himself all the stray bits and pieces. In Gnosticism, God sends forth an emanation of himself, a spiritual redeemer, who descends through layers and layers of reality from pure spirit to dense matter and attempts to teach some of the divine sparks of spirit their true identity and home.

Once awakened by knowledge, we're able to begin the journey back. In this view, then, who is Jesus? Despite their diversity, Gnostics taught that Jesus was the human vehicle for this divine messenger, Christ, who was sent by God to rescue the soul from the body. All forms of Gnosticism denied that Christ, this heavenly spiritual redeemer, became incarnate, given their antithesis between spirit and matter.

So, they argued that Christ either temporarily associated himself with the man Jesus, adoptionism, or he simply took the appearance of a physical body, docetism. For most Gnostics, the heavenly redeemer entered Jesus at his baptism and left him before he died on the cross. Gnosticism radically departed from the biblical teaching of Jesus and ended up in the ditch.

It denied the entire biblical conception of God as the Creator and Lord, who shares his role with no one, and the reality of God and the Son as co-equal with the Father. Additionally, Gnostics denied the reality of the incarnation, including the full and complete humanity of the incarnate Son. As such, Gnosticism left us with an entirely different conception of sin and salvation.

It is not surprising that the early church fathers, such as Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, tirelessly argued against it. They correctly realized Gnosticism was a heresy that had to be rejected in toto. They tirelessly opposed it because it hung around, it tapped into the philosophical currents of Neoplatonism, and it was hard to take that away from the people.

The God of the Old Testament was not evil. He's the Creator God, and passages like Colossians 1, that great passage, shows the Creator and the Redeemer are the same. The Redeemer is the Creator.

The Creator is the Redeemer, and that God loves his creation, and the Son became a part of it, if you will, in his incarnation, and his death saves, and he was raised the

third day again, and he's the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, and he's the firstfruits, and we will, at the epitome of our salvation, is not our escape from the prison house of the body as pure spirits, but it is the resurrection of our bodies to be transformed, Philippians 3.21, by Christ, who has the power to subject all things to himself, that our bodies might be like his glorious body, and the end of the whole scenario is a new heavens and a new earth, in which the Trinity and the people of God dwell. So different than Gnosticism. It is not funny.

So thus, we've taken a little gander at the heresies associated with Judaism, Monarchianism, and Gnosticism. What about the earliest orthodox Christological presentations? How did the earliest Christians conceive of him? Did they have the doctrine of the Trinity, and did it all work out? No. Did they say he was one person with two natures? Actually, Tertullian comes close to that incredibly.

You know, my saying is that God gives gifts, but most of the early Christians were busy dodging persecution and lions, right, and hardly had time to think. Many early church fathers could be discussed, but we want to talk about Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen. Ignatius, he died around 115.

He was a pretty early witness, and he wasn't a great theologian, but he was a great martyr and a great Christian man, and he affirmed truths about Jesus. Ignatius was a contemporary of the Apostle John. He was martyred around 115.

While awaiting his death, he wrote seven epistles, which we have, that have been preserved. As noted, Ignatius wrote strongly against Gnosticism, thus stressing the reality of the incarnation and the full humanity of Christ. What he's doing is, he's giving pieces that the council will later put together, well, people even before the council.

What the councils do is they formalize, and they put into writing confessions and creeds that are a result of much study and pain and struggle, and that should be received by the people of God, not equal with scripture but as an expression of the universal church's affirmation of scriptural teachings. Ignatius famously writes, quote, turn a deaf ear. Therefore, I'm quoting from his Epistle to the Trallians, turn a deaf ear, therefore, when anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was really born, who both ate and drank, who really was persecuted under Pontius Pilate, who really was crucified and died, who moreover really was raised from the dead when his father raised him up. This is exciting.

Wow. But if, as some atheists, that is, unbelievers, say, he suffered in appearance only, stoicism, why am I in chains? Sounds like Paul, doesn't he? And why do I want to fight with wild beasts? If that is the case, I die for no reason—a man of courage, eager to die for Christ.

Whew. We will read of one brilliant thinker who wanted to die for Christ, but he was unable to because his mother hid his toga. I'm not joking.

Origen's mother hid his toga. He didn't want to die for Christ naked. Anyway, Ignatius also affirms the full deity of the Son.

In his epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 7, verse 2, Ignatius sets two series of statements about the one Christ side by side. On the left are statements about Christ in the flesh as man. On the right are those that are made of the pre-existent Son.

There can be no doubt that Ignatius is the son of God. Immediately after the apostolic age, he believed in the full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ: Justin Martyr and the Logos Christology.

Justin's dates are around 100. That means we don't know exactly when he was born. We do know his death.

That's a firm date, 165. As Christians proclaim Christ to their culture, they experience intellectual opposition. A number of Christian writers, known as the apologists, sought to explain and defend the faith to its cultured despisers.

One of the most famous of these early apologists was Justin Martyr. In regard to Christology, he is especially important for the development of what is called Logos Christology. As an apologist, Justin believed that the Logos was an important link between Christian and Hellenistic thought.

As a student of the philosophers, Justin claimed that the philosophers were basically correct on many points, although their overall view was incomplete since it lacked Christ. Thus, in spite of the differences between pagan philosophical thought and Christianity, Justin maintained that the philosophers had glimpses of the truth and that this was more than a mere coincidence. Here, then, how did he explain the partial agreements between the philosophers and Christian theology? Justin's answer centered on the Logos, the word.

According to Greek thought, the human mind can understand reality because it shares the Logos for a universal reason. This is Greek philosophy. This is not the Bible yet.

This is not Christian doctrine. So he's speaking into his culture. The human mind can understand reality because it shares in the Logos for a universal reason that undergirds all reality.

Reality is rational, and we are rational because we share in that Logos. But for the Christian, especially in light of John's gospel, we affirm that in Jesus of Nazareth, the

Logos was made flesh, John 1:14. In the incarnation, then, the underlying reason of the universe, the Logos, has come to this earth and lived among us.

Justin appeals to this truth, thus linking Christian and Hellenistic thought in Christ together. With his use of Logos Christology, Justin strongly affirms the deity of the Logos and the reality of the incarnation. He teaches that the Logos is God's pre-existent spirit, a second God if you will, who now has become incarnate in Jesus Christ.

In this way, two truths are stressed. The Logos' eternal oneness with the Father and also his appearance in human history as the Logos emitted or expressed. In addition, Justin wants to speak of the relation between the Logos and the Father as eternal.

And even though the Father generates the Logos, this in no way diminishes the Father or the Logos because, like fire kindled from fire is his analogy, that from which many can be kindled is by no means made less, but remains the same. In this explanation, Justin is seeking to make sense of how God is one, yet the Father and Son are both deity and share the divine nature. Any such illustration is imperfect, but he's a smart cookie, and he's doing good.

He makes mistakes, as we'll see in a moment, which also is inevitable, I suppose. To further explain the Logos' relation to God, Justin speaks of the Logos as the cosmic Logos, who is God's offshoot and agent in creation. The Logos then was in the world before Jesus.

He spoke through the Jewish prophets and Greek philosophers. In this way, the Logos, literally, the Logos spermatikos, is the one who is in every human being and is the source of all truth whenever it is understood and uttered. But now in time, this Logos has taken on flesh and come to dwell among us as Jesus, the Messiah.

The Logos spermatikos is a Logos in seed form, if you will. By the use of Logos Christology, Justin seeks to achieve a number of things. First, he seeks to explain why Christians may embrace all truth as God's truth.

Second, he explains why Christians can believe in and worship Jesus Christ as God, a second God, without rejecting monotheism. Third, he explains why people must become Christians. The same Christ as universal Logos is the source of all truth, beauty, and goodness.

But only Christians know the Logos fully by faith in Christ. In the end, Justin argues, all thought and all belief in Christ is the source of all truth. One of the problems that Justin bequeaths later generations, however, is subordinationism, viewing the Logos as ontologically subordinate to the Father by making the procession of the Logos from the Father dependent on creation.

This will open the door for some to say there is no eternal preexistence of the Logos in a distinct personal existence, a door, sadly, that later Arian theology walks through. I might say there is a biblical subordinationism, okay? But it is different than this subordinationism that we're being warned against. Jesus says the Father is greater than I in the farewell discourses, all right? And Jesus prays to the Father, the Father doesn't pray to Jesus, all right? The Father and Spirit empower Jesus. Jesus doesn't empower the Father.

So, there's a biblical subordinationism, but it must be distinguished from a subordinationism of essence. An essential subordinationism denies the deity of the Son. A functional or economic subordinationism says that the God the Son became a human being for us sinners and our salvation, and in that, he subordinated himself, not essentially, but in terms of the work of the gospel, that is an economic subordination, or in terms of his function.

God in heaven can't die on the cross, God on earth did die on the cross. The Son thus subordinated himself to the Father, not essentially, but economically or functionally, in order to save us from our sins. Subordinationism, yes, but the cults today make the same error as errorists did in the early centuries.

We'll see more in a little bit with areas, for example, when they say, look, there's subordination in the New Testament, right? Right. Therefore, the Son is not God, right? Wrong. Once again, they're stumbling over this mystery of the one person with two natures, fully co-essential with the Father in his deity, fully co-essential with us as regards his humanity, as Chalcedon put it.

Irenaeus of Lyon, around 130 to 202, many regard him as the first real Christian theologian, a brilliant thinker, caught up in a great deal of fighting against the Gnostics with some really good ideas. Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor, spent his Christian training as a disciple of Polycarp, and was then sent as a presbyter to Gaul, where he was appointed Bishop of Lyon in 177. Probably his best-known apologetic work is his defense of Christianity against Gnosticism called *Against Heresies*.

It is justly famous. In his response to Gnosticism, he presents an entirely different theology than theirs. For example, in contrast to Gnosticism, Irenaeus affirms that the one God who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is the creator of heavens and earth, *ex nihilo*, out of nothing by his word and by his spirit, has two hands.

He's famous for this picture of the two hands of God. Any picture could be distorted. The two hands of God, of course, are the Son and the Spirit.

It's a picture of the unity and the complementarity of the working of the Trinitarian persons together, their harmony. There's the word I wanted. For Irenaeus, God has

direct contact with his creation unlike Gnostic thought, and he has not brought it to pass through a range of intermediaries.

Some argue that Irenaeus's two-hands view treats the Son and Spirit as subordinate to the Father, which is possible since he wrote in the Antinocene era. I don't think that's correct, but I will say this. It is unfair to judge earlier fathers by later terminology.

It's just simply unfair. How in the world is Tertullian supposed to use the language of a council a hundred years after him? Not fair. Work with their ideas.

Plus, the church refined its terminology many times as iron sharpened iron, especially between East and West. They spoke different languages, Greek and Latin, and the same word meant different things to them. And so the compromise was essential, as we'll see.

Yet Irenaeus clearly places this subordination within God's being and does not treat the Son and the Spirit as external to the Father, but as one with him. For Irenaeus, the Son and Spirit are fully God, yet for him, this affirmation does not detract from the divine unity. The Father, Son, and Spirit are viewed as working in union and harmony, excuse me, in creation, providence, and redemption, for they are in each other prior to creation.

It's remarkable. In terms of his view of human beings and God's plan of salvation, Irenaeus follows the storyline of scripture, creation, fall, and redemption and argues that humans were created good but that they became corrupt by a voluntary act of the will tied to Adam and a historic fall. Furthermore, precisely because the entire race is in Adam, all humans enter the human race as fallen.

Our predicament in the end is not metaphysical, spiritual souls trapped in physical bodies, but moral. Our predicament is not metaphysical or ontological but moral, and thus, we need God to bring about our salvation through his own provision of himself. In regard to Christology, Irenaeus was the first to formulate the meaning of the person and work of Christ in a systematic way.

He did so by following the structure and framework of scripture. He clearly affirmed that Jesus is fully man and fully God. He did not discuss at length the relations of the Father and Son with the Father or their pre-existence.

However, he viewed both as deities, and he rejected the Logos as merely an emanation or merely an attribute or expression of God. Instead, he argued that the Logos has always existed as the one who reveals the Father and thereby is personally distinct from him and not as a mode of the Father, which helps clarify some of the

problems that Logos Christology bequeathed the church. For Irenaeus, the Son is true God by nature.

Furthermore, Irenaeus strongly emphasized the unity of Christ's person. Against the Gnostics who distinguished between Christ, the being of heavenly origin, and Jesus, the earthly being, Irenaeus declared that Jesus Christ is one and the same, an expression later incorporated in the Chalcedonian definition. It's Greek, *eis kai ho autos*, one and the same.

It is precisely because of who Jesus is that he can do the work that scripture attributes to him. He is accurately tapping into the biblical combination, linking the person and the work of Christ. It's beautiful, so much good.

In unpacking the doctrine of salvation, Irenaeus rejected the spirit-flesh dualism of Gnosticism and instead spoke of recapitulation in the sense that salvation is a renewal and restoration of creation, not its abrogation. Since all humanity is in Adam, Christ must recapitulate Adam. And to do so, Jesus must be fully God and fully man.

Hence, the rationale for the incarnation. In addition, so Irenaeus relived each state of human life. Unfortunately, he misunderstood the statement in John 8 where Jesus' opponents say, you're not yet 50 years old, and you have never seen Abraham see you.

And Irenaeus said, that means Jesus must have been near 50. So, in his understanding, Jesus sanctified infancy by being a little boy, an infant, and childhood by being a child. I don't think he distinguished teenage years, but if that was the case, and then old manhood, if you will, by living up to close to 50.

He went through all of that, and unlike Adam, he was successful. You get it? So, he sums up the human race in himself as representative, and he recapitulates each stage of human life successfully, as Adam failed. He certainly believed in a, pardon my French, Arminian view of the freedom of the will; however, I am just being fair here.

Calvinists quote Augustine, but earlier fathers are not very Augustinian. How can I say it? So that's the case. And the same is true of the Eastern Church, ancient and modern, as a matter of fact. In addition, Irenaeus gave us two crucial phrases: *Filius Dei*, *Filius Hominis*, and *Factus*. The son of God has become a son of man.

And *Iesus Christos*, *Homai*, *Homai Deus*, Jesus Christ, true man and true God. For Irenaeus, the redemptive work of Christ depends fully on the identity between his humanity and our humanity. This is a high point of Christological clarity that will be attained again but not surpassed almost three centuries later at Chalcedon.

God gave the gifts, and Irenaeus had a boatload of them, a truckload of them. He used them in fencing, fighting off Gnosticism, and giving a positive view of the person and work of Christ. Tertullian, my own doctoral mentor, James Paine of Drew University's favorite was Tertullian.

Around 160 to 230, Tertullian was born and lived in Carthage, North Africa. He was born into a pagan Roman family and educated in rhetoric and law. Sometime before 197, he became a Christian.

He's the first notable representative of the Latin-speaking church. Beforehand, as with Irenaeus, the father spoke Greek, dubbed by many as the father of Latin or Western theology. He also wrote as an apologist against Marcion, a famous Gnostic, and other heretical groups.

For example, he wrote a prescription for heretics. He wrote against Marcion and against Praxeus, another heretic. Tertullian, along with Irenaeus, opposed Gnosticism using many of the same arguments.

Tertullian also wrote against modalism. In answering modalism, Tertullian anticipates the later formulations of Nicaea and Chalcedon, as Jean Gallo notes, quote, quote, he anticipated the answers later provided in the Eastern church to three great Christological errors, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Monophysitism, close quote. In fact, he coins the very terms that will be used in those later councils.

He's the first to use the word trinitas, trinity, to refer to God. And he argues that God is one substance, una substantia, in three persons, tres personae. The names father, son, and spirit are not modes, they could be modes, but not modes in a modalistic sense, but represent real, eternal distinctions.

Yet this freeness does not deny God's oneness. Tertullian is also helpful in explaining what he means by his terms. By substance, he means that fundamental ontological beingness that makes something what it is.

While person, persona, refers to the identity of action that provides distinctness. Also, as with others in this time period, there's a subordinationist strand in Tertullian's thinking. He argues for a divine ordering among the persons.

The father is greater than the son, who is second, while the spirit is a third of the Father and the Son. But this ordering seems to be explained in more ontological than functional terms, right? If it just was functional, that's all right. If it has to do with being, on the order of being, that's problematic because that could hint at or imply an ontological or metaphysical subordinationism, which means the spirit and son are not equal to the father.

Historically, of course, it took the church to understand the son's deity for the church to confess the spirit's deity. And that actually just kind of came along rather naturally when they got to binitarianism, if you will. Trinitarianism was not far behind.

For example, as Robert Latham explains, Tertullian suggests that before all things were made, God was alone, yet not alone, for he had with him his own reason, ratio, which he possessed in himself, that is, in his own thought, which the Greeks called logos, close quote. Technically, however, Tertullian argues, "God did not have his word, sermo, at this time, only reason. God sent out his word at creation,"

But does this mean that the word came into existence only at creation and had no preexistence? Tertullian distinguishes between the imminent word and the emitted word. The word was always inherent in reason, and reason was within God, but is explicitly a person only from creation. It's hard to avoid the conclusion that Tertullian is advocating an ontological subordination.

Yet, in other places, he insists on the real personal distinctions of Father, Son, and Spirit, and that they all share fully in the one being of God. This tension is not fully resolved. Maybe it's too much to ask since further reflection has to take place.

That is a charitable conclusion, I think. When returning to Christology, Tertullian affirms that the subject of the incarnation is the logos, who has taken on flesh. In thinking through the relation between the deity and humanity of Christ, Tertullian does not discuss the issue in depth, but he does use the same basic concepts of substance, nature, and person.

Jesus Christ was of a divine substance and human substance, yet only one person. In this way, he affirms two natures in Christ, yet united in one subject, who is the divine son. He is anticipating Chalcedon.

Some of these early fathers are really gifted and applied themselves, my goodness, against what would later become Nestorianism, Tertullian clearly argues that the person of Christ was not the result of the conjunction of two substances, thus forming a composite person but a single divine person who possessed a twofold state or a twofold substance. But as noted above, Tertullian is unclear in regard to the subordinationist issue, and he seems to hold that the son is a derivation of the father's substance, yet he does place these relations within the Godhead and does not want to imply inequality of being, but an explanation of relations and origin. Tertullian's unique contribution to Christology is his concept of person, which in future years is developed with more sophistication.

Tertullian clearly preserves the unity of the son in the person and the subsistence of that person in two natures, so that Jesus is now fully God and fully man, yet he is not

always crystal clear on these concepts. Furthermore, against Gnosticism and Docetism, Tertullian affirmed that Christ had a human soul, a truth Irenaeus did not discuss but which became crucial in later Christological reflection. For Tertullian, human nature was comprised of a body and a soul, and thus, for Christ, since he was fully man and in order to save us, he had to assume a body-soul composite.

As Gallo notes, this soteriological argument, quote, was involved more than a century later against Apollinarianism, close quote, which denied Christ's human soul, and it also allowed Tertullian to account for Christ's emotions and passions, which he experienced in his human soul. Also, Tertullian's strong affirmation of Christ's two natures, natures which retained their own properties and were not confused or mingled, was also important in the Church's stand against Monophysitism, which contended for one blended nature as a result of the Incarnation. It's time to wrap up this lecture, and I'll just say that our next lecture will take on Origin and the Council of Nicaea and Arianism, in which the early Church emphatically, definitively, and in a conciliar way, as an official council, affirmed the full deity of the Son.

This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christology. This is session 2, Patristic Christology, Part 1, Before Nicaea.