

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christology, Session 4, Patristic Christology, Part 3, Development, False Paths, Apollinarianism and Nestorianism**

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson and his teaching on Christology. This is session 4, Patristic Christology, Part 3, Development, False Paths, Apollinarianism and Nestorianism.

We continue with our treatment of Patristic Christology as we move ever closer to the Council of Chalcedon, thinking clearly about the subject, the person of the Incarnation.

Related to the Trinitarian discussion is the question of the subject of the Incarnation. Given the nature-person distinction, we need to ask the question, who precisely became incarnate? Who is the subject of the Incarnation? Scripture is clear, the Word became flesh, John 1:14. It was the person of the Son who became incarnate. Two important points follow from this assertion.

First, in the Incarnation, it was not the divine nature that became flesh or assumed a human nature, as if natures are acting as personal subjects. Nor did the Father or the Spirit become flesh. Instead, it was God the Son, the second person of the Godhead, who became flesh.

Prior to the Incarnation, the Son, from eternity, along with the Father and Spirit, equally shared, possessed, and subsisted in the one divine nature, and thus lived in perfect communion and love, mutually indwelling one another. It is for this reason that the Father, Son, and Spirit are fully and equally God, even though, as persons, they are irreducibly distinct, a fact demonstrated by the Incarnation. Second, affirming that the subject of the Incarnation is the person of the Son is not simply saying that the Son is one person who possesses two natures, as true as that statement is.

Rather, it is to affirm that at the center of the Christ's being is the person of the Son living on earth as a man. This affirmation is over against those in the early church who thought of Christ more as a man who was indwelt by God the Son. The Incarnation is the personal act of the divine Son who deliberately, voluntarily, and sacrificially chose to take on the form of a servant and make himself poor in obedience to the Father's will and for our salvation.

Philippians 2:7, 2 Corinthians 8:9. In addition, we must also affirm that the Son continued to be who he had always been as God the Son. His identity did not change, nor did he change in ceasing to possess all the divine attributes and performing and

exercising all his divine functions and prerogatives. Yet now, in taking human nature into personal union, he is able to live a fully human life and enter into a whole new range of experiences and relationships.

The Son, as the personal subject of the Incarnation, is now able to experience life in a human body and in a human soul. He experiences human pain and human temptations and even tastes death. Again, as MacLeod notes, before and apart from the Incarnation, God knew such things by observation.

But observation, even when it is that of omniscience, falls short of personal experience. Thus, it is what the Incarnation made possible for God, a real personal experience of being human. What this entails, then, is that the baby conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary, who was born, who grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God in men, Luke 2.52, was the same divine person who had eternally been the Son in relation to the Father and Spirit.

The Incarnate One was not simply a man in whom God dwelt or even a man uniquely empowered by the Spirit of God. Instead, Jesus of Nazareth is God the Son, living personally on earth and experiencing what it means to be human, for us, and for our salvation. In fact, the Church insisted on this because this is precisely what Scripture teaches, and this is precisely the kind of Redeemer we need.

We need a Savior who is a man to represent us. But more than this, we need the Lord to come and save. Salvation is of the Lord, and unless it is the Lord who comes, suffers, and dies on the cross, then His death would have no power or efficacy to accomplish our salvation.

And the Son, as the second person of the Godhead, did this by taking a human nature with its entire range of capacities into His own divine person, alongside the divine nature that He had eternally possessed. Fairbairn captures this emphasis with his statement that the fundamental assertion of the early Church was that the one person who is Jesus Christ is God the Son. It was God the Son as a person, not just a divine nature, who came down from heaven.

It was God the Son as a person who united humanity to Himself, not two natures united to make a new person. What makes this possible is that the person of the Son who possesses the divine nature is able to act in and through both natures. Prior to the Incarnation, the Son acted in and through the divine nature, along with the Father and Spirit.

But now, as a result of the personal action of the Son in obedience to His Father and by the agency of the Spirit, He is also able to act in and through His human nature. This understanding assumes that nature, whether divine or human, consists of

attributes, characteristics, or capacities that make it what it is. It also assumes that natures never exist by themselves.

They always have a person in whom the nature resides. In this case, in the case of the Incarnation, then Fairbairn, along with the Church, has drawn the following conclusion, and I quote: God the Son, one of the three and only persons who possess the divine nature, added to His own person a complete human nature, a full complement of the characteristics and components that make one human. In this way, the same person, the second person of the Trinity, was both divine and human.

He was divine because from all eternity, He had possessed the divine nature. After the Incarnation, He was also human because He took upon Himself flesh, that is, all the characteristics that define one as a human being. Because this same person, whom we now call Jesus Christ, was both divine and human, He was able to live on two levels at the same time.

He continued to live on the divine level as He had done from all eternity, sharing fellowship with the Father, maintaining the universe, see Colossians 1:17, and whatever else God does. But now He began to live on a human level at the same time, being conceived and born as a baby, growing up in Nazareth, learning scripture as any other Jewish boy would, becoming hungry, thirsty, and tired, and even dying, close quote. Fairbairn's famous book, *Life in the Trinity*, pages 143 and 44.

Obviously, this affirmation raises a number of legitimate yet difficult questions regarding the Incarnate Son. Throughout Church history, whether it was Arianism or other heretical views, and especially since the Enlightenment, one of the appeals of the non-Orthodox Christologies has been their surface ability to explain, in quotation marks, areas of mystery. For example, in 19th-century Kenoticism, much of its appeal that it can better explain the psychology of the Incarnate Son was its solution to deny that the experienced knowledge of the Incarnate Son operated on two levels simultaneously.

Instead, it argued that the experienced knowledge of Jesus was merely human since He had set aside His divine attributes in becoming a man. The problem, however, is that this explanation surrendered the Biblical teaching and the Church's affirmation that the Incarnate Son was able to live simultaneously a divine and human life due to His possessing two natures. They solved the problem by creating a greater problem.

Later in the Reformation period, the Church's affirmation that the Son was able to live on two levels simultaneously became known as the *extra calvinisticum*. The term is actually a Lutheran attack on Reformed theology. It's the Latin *extra* or *outside* or *without*.

Calvinisticum is Latin for calvinistic. It's the calvinistic extra or outside, the teaching that the second person of the Trinity became wholly incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, but since He's a member of the Trinity, and the Trinity didn't become nobility when the Son became a man, the Son also remained fully outside or without the Incarnation. The second person, fully incarnate, the second person remained outside.

Otherwise, the Trinity has exploded, and that's an impossibility. As E. David Willis explains quote, the so-called extra calvinisticum teaches that the Eternal Son of God, even after the Incarnation, was united to human nature to form one person but was not restricted to the flesh close quote. But it's crucial to note the extra was not new to Calvin.

It was what the Church had always affirmed, given that the subject of both natures was the person of the Son. This is why Willis rightly argues Calvin's extra should be called the extra catholicum, the Catholic extra, meaning universal Church, or the extra patristicum, the patristic extra, because it was the teaching of the Fathers. The Church has always deemed it necessary to confess that because the subject of the Incarnation is God the Son, our Lord Jesus, even in the state of humiliation, continued to live, act, and experience as both God and man.

The person who's able to do both of these things is the same before and after the Incarnation. You know, yet in obedience to his Father and in reliance upon the Spirit, the Son continued to exercise his divine prerogatives as the Father allowed and consistent with this messianic mission, while also living a fully human life as our new covenant head. Mysterious indeed, but it's essential to confess that.

Was the Trinity reduced permanently? No, it's impossible. The Trinity is God, and yet is the Son truly incarnate? Oh yeah, fully incarnate, fully extra. The Fathers had two different versions of the Incarnation.

Word man Christology, the eternal word, the Son, the second person, takes to himself a full human nature, body, and soul. In word flesh Christology, the Son takes to himself merely a human body without a human soul. I want to always speak respectfully of the people of God and the people of God; a friend recently said it well when he said, I never thought about that before.

And I wanted to say back, I didn't, but that's okay. I had never thought that Jesus had a human soul or spirit before. I wanted to say, well, as long as you didn't deny it, you're all right.

Being ignorant of something is okay. Denying the same is not always okay. En route to Chalcedon, the church also had to wrestle with the nature of Christ's humanity.

One of the unresolved questions from Nicaea was whether Christ had a human soul and, thus, a complete human nature. Walter Toyin and others had already insisted on the existence of Christ's soul, on the existence of Christ's soul. Arius denied its reality and argued for some kind of composite nature in Christ.

Even staunch defenders of Nicene orthodoxy, such as Athanasius, were not completely clear on this point. He seems to have taught, yes, Jesus had a human soul, unlike Apollinarius, who said the logos occupied the place of Jesus' soul. Therefore, Jesus had an incomplete humanity.

No, Athanasius said he had it, but it looks like he didn't act. It didn't act. So he's orthodox, and yet it's not a full word man Christology.

For example, in Athanasius' refutation of Arianism, he makes no distinction, no mention of Jesus' human soul, and seems to think of the incarnation as a son assuming a human body but not a soul. It's one of the reasons why he attributes the spiritual qualities of Christ to the logos, whereas his passions are attributed to his body. After the Apollinarian controversy, however, the church carefully insisted that the son in the incarnation assumed the human body and soul, and my understanding is Athanasius did the same, although the human soul didn't do much.

Again, he's within the pale of orthodoxy, but he's reluctant to affirm a full God word man Christology. He did. It's the word man, but the word man is not really operative in terms of the soul aspect of man.

In the early church, broadly speaking, there were two ways of thinking about Christ's human nature—word logos man versus word logos flesh. In the Arian debate, and later with Apollinarius, the church insisted that a word-man view was necessary to account for the biblical teaching.

The need for a word man Christology was especially evident in the post-Chalcedonian discussion regarding the will issue, as represented by the church's insistence that the incarnate son had two wills. A word man view, diothelitism, over against the view that he had one will, monothelitism, a word flesh view. We want to distinguish these different views and highlight their significance for the emergence of an orthodox Christology.

The distinction between word man and word flesh Christologies resulted as Fairbairn contends, “from different ways of refuting the theological challenge of Arianism, which argued that since God the son suffered and died, he must have been passable rather than impassable and therefore less than the Father.” In response, the Antiochians, the theologians at Antioch, argued that the one who suffered and died was not God the Son, and thus, they could still affirm that God the Son was impassable and equal to the Father.

But as Fairbairn notes quote, this led them to a Christology that divided the logos from the man Jesus and understood salvation as a human march following Jesus from what Theodore called the first age, one of imperfection and, excuse me, morality, to the second age called the perfect human life, close quote. It was for this reason that the Antiochians tended to read the Old Testament in a more literal way, but it was their overall theology that produced this kind of interpretation, not any particular desire to take history more seriously. By contrast, the Alexandrian view refuted Arianism by affirming that it was the person of the son who suffered but that he suffered in his human nature, not in his divine nature, thus employing the crucial nature-person distinction.

This led them to a different Christology, which is important to the Orthodox view of the church, namely that God the Son was the active subject at every point in our salvation, in relation with the Father and spirit, in his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and so on. Thus, Alexandrian exegesis of text describing Christ, as Fairbairn notes, quote, ascribed all of his actions and experiences to the logos himself but divided between what the logos did that was in keeping with his human nature and what he did that was in keeping with his newly adopted human way of living. Antiochians, especially Nestorius, dealt with the same passages by ascribing some actions to the logos and others to the man Jesus, close quote.

The upshot is this: differences among these schools have more to do with different theologies about Christ and salvation in their response to Arianism than with different emphases in exegesis. We must not think of two different well-developed schools, but rather, we must think of two different approaches to theology, salvation, and Christology. If we think of Antiochian thinkers, particularly three main individuals, Theodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Nestorius, who were all condemned by the church, we must view their Christology as non-orthodox.

As Fairbairn notes, all three of these thinkers, quote, viewed Christ divisively and thus placed their emphasis on the assumed man rather than the divine logos, close quote. So, in our discussion of word-man versus word-flesh, we will not link these views to different schools. Instead, we'll link them to the central issue of the nature of Christ's humanity.

With this caveat in place, let us now describe these two approaches. What, then, is a word-flesh view and its implications for understanding Christ's humanity? The view is this: in the Incarnation, the Son, logos, replaces a human soul and enters into a union with the human body so as to form a human being. But, it is crucial to note that what is lost is the full humanity of Christ.

Why so? Normally, the church is identified with the human soul, an entire human psychology that includes reason, will, intellect, emotions, etc. But without a human

soul in Christ, or even a replacement of it by the Son, a word-flesh view undercuts Christ's full humanity and has difficulty accounting for how the Incarnate Son could experience the whole range of human emotions and experiences; I'm sorry, and relationships, most significantly act as our Redeemer. In addition, word-flesh approaches tended either to endorse one nature of views of Christ, monophysitism, or some kind of blended nature instead of two natures.

By contrast, a word-man view insists that in the Incarnation, the Divine Son assumed a complete human nature, body, and soul, and thus a complete human psychology, including the entire activity of knowing and willing, building on the nature-person distinction. This view maintained that the person is the subject of his nature, that the person is the subject of his nature who acts in and through his nature. In terms of Christology, then, the person of the Son, given that he has assumed a full human nature, is now able to live a fully human life, alongside how he has also lived in relation to the Father and Spirit.

But to live a human life, the Son needed more than a mere body or flesh. He also needed a human soul in order to will, act, and experience as a man. As the Church traveled the road to Chalcedon, her understanding of Christ's humanity became more precise by embracing a word-man view.

Scripture clearly insists on Christ's full humanity, and the Church knew that it could not account for this teaching unless a word-man view was embraced. Ultimately, the Church knew that what was at stake was salvation. If the Son did not personally assume our full human nature and live and die in our place as the man Christ Jesus, how could he redeem us? In addition, as the word-man view stressed, it was not enough for Christ to have one nature or two incomplete natures.

He, as the Divine Son, needed two natures, thus explaining how he is fully God and fully man simultaneously. With these theological developments in place, let us now turn to three heresies that arose in the years between Nicaea and Chalcedon, which resulted in further Christological clarity. In the Church's response to these heresies, we discover once again the positive side of heresy.

Greater clarity and precision in the Church is wrestling with the wonder and glory of the Incarnation. We do not mean the heresies are positive in themselves, but God has led the Church in controversy theology, and he forces the Church to seek out, understand, confess, and promulgate the truth to defeat error. From Nicaea to Chalcedon, false Christological paths.

After the establishment of Trinitarian Orthodoxy, further Christological clarity resulted, which eventually led to the Chalcedonian definition, the statement of the Council of Chalcedon, and the definitive Christological affirmation. Specifically, greater precision was achieved in the person-nature distinction, the nature of

Christ's humanity, and the unity of his person, as three false views regarding Christ were rejected. Let us think through this development by first seeing what the Church rejected before we return to the positive formulation of Chalcedon.

Apollinarianism. Apollinarianism is the view attributed to Apollinarius, Bishop of Laodicea, 315-392, who was a staunch defender of the deity of Christ, good, and Nicene Orthodoxy, good. He was a very good friend of Athanasius, good, but given his aberrant Christological views, specifically in his understanding of Christ's human nature, Athanasius and the three Cappadocian theologians later opposed him, sadly, good.

His view was rejected by several Church councils, including the Synod of Alexandria, 362, and most significantly, the Council of Constantinople in 381. Apollinarius' view represented a classic word-flesh understanding of the Incarnation rather than word-man. He affirmed that God the Son was consubstantial with God the Father, thus fully God, yet in the Incarnation, the Son took to himself an incomplete human nature, a human body, flesh, but not a human soul.

He sought to avoid the idea that the Incarnation was a mere God dwelling in man. Instead, as Grillmeier notes, for Apollinarius, the Incarnation only comes about if divine pneuma, spit, and earthly sarx, flesh, together form a substantial unity in such a way that the man in Christ first becomes a man through the union of these two components. In other words, in Christ, there's a substantial union of one heavenly element, logos, and one earthly element, the human body.

To be sure, the parts of the God-man, Christ, are not equivalent. As Grillmeier explains, quote, the divine pneuma, spirit, maintains its preeminence throughout. It becomes the life-giving spirit, the effectual mover of the fleshly nature, and together the two form a unity of life and being, close quote, with the divine pneuma, or logos, that which directs and energizes the flesh, similar to the form-matter scheme of Aristotle.

The end result is that Christ has become, has one nature, *mea fuis*, not two, a composite unity, a living unity of the divine logos and human flesh, which forms the self-determining individual we know as Jesus of Nazareth. For Apollinarius, given this composite unity and one nature view of the Incarnation, in Christ is a real exchange of attributes. We'll deal with this later.

Exchange of attributes, *communicatio idiomatum*, some kind of blend of deity and humanity, so that Christ is fully God and fully man, not in a true nature sense, with the person of the sun subsisting in both natures, but in a composite one nature sense, or what Grillmeier calls a natural unity. Primarily on sociological grounds, the church strongly rejected this view. Christ cannot represent and redeem us if he does not assume a complete human nature.



Gregory of Nazianzus stated the church's position well in his famous statement, what is not assumed is not healed. What is not assumed is not healed. Did he merely save our bodies, or did he come to save us body and soul? For Christ to serve as a representative covenantal head and substitute, he must assume a complete human nature, body and soul.

Otherwise, our redemption is incomplete. In rejecting this view, the church drew a line in the sand. A proper Christology is necessary for soteriology.

To have a redeemer who actually redeems, he must be fully God and fully man. The person and work of Christ are inseparably linked. He became incarnate to save his people from their sins.

That's the reason. Furthermore, in the church's rejection of Apollinarianism, three important issues resurfaced. First, as the church carefully distinguished person and nature in Trinitarian theology, it also had to do with Christology and contended for two natures in one Christ, not one.

Second, the church rejected word-flesh Christology as inadequate, thus affirming the reality of Christ's human soul, which includes a human will, mind, and psychology. Third, the church insisted that the unified active subject person of Christ is a divine son who added to himself a complete humanity, and thus, the person is not a composite union constructed by the combination of logos and human flesh, nor is it, as Nestorius would later contend, a conjunction or union of two personal beings. Instead, the active subject is the eternal son who assumed a human nature with all of its capacities, thus allowing him to live a fully human and divine life.

Nestorianism. Nestorianism is identified with, you guessed it, Nestorius, 381 to 451, the Archbishop of Constantinople from 428 to 431, who was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431. There's a legitimate debate about whether Nestorius himself was Nestorian, and there's no doubt that the debate between Nestorius and Cyril of Alexandria, who brought the charges against him, was very heated.

In what follows, we will assume that Nestorius held to what is called Nestorianism. That is very debatable, and I had been taught that Nestorius is not a Nestorian, so I'll leave it as a matter of debate, and I will yield to greater knowledge of these things and say perhaps it should be tipped in the direction of saying he was, after all, a Nestorian. Nestorianism is often identified with a word-man approach to Christology, yet it flounders on the question of the unity of Christ's person.

So, holding the word man doesn't necessarily mean you got it all right. Just like in Gnosticism, holding to a divine son who comes down, not all the way down, starting with the divine son, doesn't make your Christology right. It's more complicated.

It's a divine son who truly becomes incarnate. That eliminates Docetism. In this case, word-man is right, not merely word-flesh, but that's not enough.

It's word-man in one person with two natures, not in two persons or something like that. Nestorius' concern following his teacher, Theodore of Mopsuestia, was to emphasize the full humanity of Christ, contra Apollinarius, and thus the full deity and humanity of Christ in two natures. Good? Good.

Yet, in stressing Christ's two natures, he left unexplained Christ's person and how the two natures are unified in him. In speaking of the union of person, *prosopon*, he conceived of it as a composite union, but not a composite in the way Apollinarius taught, namely the combining of divine and human natures to create the *prosopon* of Christ. Instead, as Fairbairn explains, Nestorius viewed it as a composite union which consisted of the conjoining or uniting of two personal subjects.

No, no, no. The personality is found in the Son himself, the *logos* and the man, the two personal subjects, *logos* and man, so that they can be called a single *prosopon*, thus the charge of teaching two persons in Christ. Fred Sanders captures Nestorius' view of Christ's person.

Fred Sanders has really good, solid, understandable books on the Trinity that I recommend to the Lord's people. Fred Sanders captures Nestorius' view of Christ's person in this way. The one person who is Jesus Christ seems to be, for Nestorius, the result of the incarnation or a way of talking about what these two vastly different entities, God the Son and the man Jesus, are doing together, are doing together.

Thus, there is a personal union in Christ, but it's a personal union of a composite nature with the accent placed on the personal subject of Christ as the assumed man. Fairbairn illustrates Nestorius' view by comparing it to a firm composed of two partners, one of whom is never actually seen but whose influence is continually felt in all the firm's decisions. The visible partner is analogous to the man Jesus, yet the *logos* is the one who stands behind him.

Words such as Christ, Son, and Lord refer to the corporate unity created by the cooperation between the two. The unity is a semantic one because the one named Christ signifies the pair of partners, but the actual personal center of Christ's being is thus understood as the man Jesus himself. Nestorius then expresses the unity in Christ, but only in an external appearance sense.

This is why the person of the union, as Bathorelos notes, quote, signified merely an external unity between the divine and human in Christ, close quote. Behind Nestorius' view, along with his teacher Theodore, is a different conception of

salvation and grace. Fairbairn characterizes their view of salvation as a two-act dispensational scheme with nothing to do with dispensationalism as we think of it.

Quote, not quote, I'm just summarizing humanity's natural conclusion, I'm not quoting Fairbairn yet; humanity's natural condition was one of mortality, mutability, and imperfection, first act or stage, and salvation is the movement toward a radically different state of immortality, incorruption, and perfection, second act or stage. In describing the first act, Theodore, for example, is unclear as to whether it's the result of the historic fall in which, in Adam, we fell from a morally good condition. He seems to assume this is, that this stage is the state of humanity from the beginning.

If so, then salvation is not a restoration of fallen humanity to its original condition, but “rather, here's a quote from Fairbairn, the elevation of humanity to an entirely new condition.” Also, in such a view of salvation, God's grace is viewed as cooperative, enabling humans to reach the second stage, with Christ serving as a supreme example of God's grace at work in him. Christ's life is the first life that passes from the first to the second stage, and as a result, his fulfillment of the Mosaic law acquitted us of the debt of the lawgiver.

His baptism gave us a model of the grace of our baptism, his obedience was a perfect model of the life of the gospel, and his crucifixion and resurrection destroyed the ultimate enemy, death, and showed us the new immortal life, quoting Fairbairn. In this way, in the language of Hebrews 2:0, Christ is the archeagos, pioneer and trailblazer who crosses to the second stage and who opens up salvation for us. It is for this reason, along with the conviction that the logos could not suffer or die, that Theodore and Nestorius place a huge emphasis on Christ's humanity and thus clearly distinguish his deity and humanity.

For Nestorius, the logos did not participate in the human events of Jesus' life. The sharp distinction between deity and humanity in Christ leads Theodore and Nestorius to treat Jesus' humanity as if it were an independent man or subject as if the role of the logos were in terms of his cooperation with the actions of the assumed man. Boy, Christology is tricky, isn't it? No doubt, Theodore and Nestorius affirm that Christ is utterly unique.

God's indwelling in him was not exactly the same as his indwelling in us. Jesus received grace and indwelling in a complete sense since he was fully united with the logos. He is both the supreme example of grace and a unique case of grace.

Yet in the Incarnation, the stress is on the assumed man and the unions explain more in terms of the indwelling of the logos, so that the single prosopon person in Christ is a way of referring to the cooperative unity between the logos and the assumed man by using titles that apply to both. Fairbairn again, Fairbairn concludes that this way of viewing Christ entails that one cannot conclude that he, Nestorius, sees the single

personal subject in Christ as being the logos or the son. In fact, it's precisely on this point that Cyril and later Chalcedonian definition stand in direct conflict with Nestorius.

For Orthodoxy, the personal subject in Christ is the eternal son. But for Nestorius, it is some kind of composite. This partly explains Nestorius' use of the term Christotokos, Christ-bearer, instead of Cyril's and Chalcedon's use of Theotokos, God-bearer, in reference to Mary.

Given the logos' transcendence, Christ two natures, and more importantly, that the personal subject in Christ is a composite union of two personal subjects, the logos and man, and not solely the divine son, Nestorius rejected the term Theotokos. For Nestorius, Mary bears only Christ's humanity with its own person. And since the logos as God is distinct from man, Theotokos must be rejected.

Cyril, died 444, on the other hand, insisted on Theotokos, along with the Church Orthodox, because he was concerned with preserving the unity of Christ's person and, along with the Orthodoxy, to view the single personal subject in Christ as the eternal son, not a composite union of two personal subjects, because the personal subject of both natures is the son, because neither nature expresses itself except in union with the son as each nature's active subject, and because anything said of one of the natures can be said of him as the son. It is necessary to say that Mary is the God-bearer in the sense that Jesus, who is born of Mary, is the incarnate son, and not just a human being indwelt by the logos. Theotokos, then, was not really a statement about Mary or elevation of Mary, anything like that.

Theotokos underscores Christ's deity and the fact that the personal subject of Christ is the eternal son, who now subsists in two natures. She bore God in her womb. No credit to her.

A godly servant whom the Lord used, we should respect her in that way, even honor her, but nothing like worship or not anything along those lines. We honor her as a godly woman. We can honor Joseph as a godly man, granted her part was more than his, but the one she bore in her womb was God, not merely Christ, as Nestorius said, as he separated the person of Christ from his human nature.

Apparently, from a human man, this debate also entailed further conclusions separate orthodoxy from Nestorianism. For example, in regard to the question of whether God can suffer, both Cyril and Nestorius agreed that God was impassable and incapable of suffering. In contrast to Theodore and Nestorius, however, Cyril affirmed that God the Son, as the active subject of human nature, is able to live a fully human life and thus experience in that human nature suffering and death.

In Cyril's famous words, Christ suffered impassibly, or to be more precise, the son impassibly made his own the sufferings of his own human nature. Cyril was not saying there was any change or diminution of Christ's human nature since, in the incarnation, the son assumed a complete human nature in addition to his divine nature, but it did entail that the son is now able to live a divine and human life. The church's rejection of Theodore and Nestorius' Christology was often nasty, as evidenced in the Cyril-Nestorius polemics, but it was necessary.

It would have been better if it weren't nasty, but that's the way it was. Ultimately, there were two crucial issues at stake: first, the unity of Christ's person.

Nestorius simply could not explain it and instead appealed to a composite union of two personal subjects, the Logos and man. But scripture does not say that Christ's human nature is an independent person acting in some relation to the divine Logos. Instead, scripture draws a consistent picture of a single person, the divine son, acting as a unifying subject now in two natures, a point that Chalcedon will strongly confess.

In fact, it is only when we affirm this critical point that we can avoid any hint of adoptionism, something Nestorius had a difficult time avoiding. The Son of God did not adopt a human being. Jesus' humanity never existed apart from its beginning in Mary's womb.

And we'll see as we continue on, therefore, did he have an impersonal humanity? And it is to the credit of a gentleman named Leontius of Byzantium, which we will see, for coining the phrase impersonal. There was no previously existing humanity of Christ, whether as a separate man or some kind of entity apart from Mary's womb. No, from the very second of the creation of his humanity in Mary's womb, it was united with the Son, with the Word.

Hence, it was never impersonal. Oh, it was impersonal in the sense that it was a big battle and terminology about this. But I don't like this impersonal stuff.

But it is true. It was impersonal in the sense that there was not a separate man. OK, but it never was really impersonal.

It was always in impersonal and hypostasis, as we will see, by virtue of union with the Word in Mary's womb. You got it? Jesus did not indwell a man or an abstract human nature. His human nature took its personality from its union with the Word in Mary's womb.

So, from its very beginning, human nature was impersonal by virtue of union with the eternal Son of God, who became the God-man. Also at stake was the vital

relation between Christology and soteriology. Ultimately, the Nestorian debate was over competing views of Christ and salvation.

In sharp contrast to Theodore and Nestorius' two-age understanding, Scripture affirms a creation-fall-redemption structure. Salvation requires more than a uniquely graced man who serves as humanity's example and trailblazer. It requires one who is God the Son.

The human problem is a serious one. We stand condemned before a holy God of the universe. And the only solution to our peril is if God himself acts to save us in order to satisfy his own righteous requirements.

Scripture is clear. The triune God must save, and he alone can do it. Salvation is God's work, and it is only God the Son incarnate who can redeem us.

We do not need merely a man indwelt by and or joined in some kind of union with God the Son. What we need is a divine Son assuming our human nature into his own person so that he can represent us and act on our behalf as our new covenant head and substitute. Amen.

This is Dr. Robert Peterson and his teaching on Christology. This is session 4, Patristic Christology, Part 3, Development, False Paths, Apollinarianism and Nestorianism.