

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christology, Session 5, Patristic Christology, Part 4, Monophysitism and the Council of Chalcedon

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christology. This is session 5, Patristic Christology, Part 4, Monophysitism and the Council of Chalcedon.

Let's pray together, gracious Father, as we move from studying the ancient church's Christology to that of modern theology.

Help us to test all things by your holy word, we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. We are concluding Patristic Christology, heading toward the Council of, the great Council of Chalcedon and its conclusions, but one more heresy to deal with and that's Monophysitism or Eutychianism. I don't think I told you before why we professors and retired professors like these big words.

We like them because they keep us employed because you need us. Monophysitism is identified with Eutychius, 380-456, a presbyter and leader of a monastery at Constantinople, who was condemned at Chalcedon in 451. Eutychius taught that as a result of the Incarnation, Christ's human nature was taken up, absorbed, and merged into the divine nature so that both natures were changed into one new nature, a nature that now was a kind of divine-human composite.

This view is also called Monophysitism, that the Incarnate Christ had one, *Manos*, nature, *Fusis*, not two. So this makes him a hybrid, neither God nor man. Eutychius' view is basically a version of the word *flesh Christology*.

As Sanders points out, for Eutychius, the meaning of the two natures, quote, does not produce a third substance equally identifiable as divine and human. Because divinity is infinitely larger than humanity, the result of the Eutychian mixing of natures is not an even compound but a mostly divine Christ. Even though this view is different from Apollinarianism, the result is similar in that in this new nature, we have an overpowering divinity and a submerged humanity.

Probably more consistently, later Monophysites insisted that the union of two natures resulted in a *tertium quid*, a third something else, literally, a third something, which was neither divine nor human. But the result of every form of Monophysitism is that Christ is neither truly God nor truly man, a view contrary to scripture and leaving us with a Christ who cannot redeem—the Council of Chalcedon 451, Christological Orthodoxy.

In October 451, 520 bishops gathered at Chalcedon to wrestle with the ongoing Christological disputes within the Church. Most of the Church's bishops were from the East, with only four from the West, two from North Africa, and two who were legates of Pope Leo of Rome. Yes, Western influence was great due to Leo's Tome, a letter that was written prior to the Council and which would be incorporated into the Chalcedonian Creed.

As with the earlier Nicene Creed, the Chalcedonian definition, that's what the Creed is called, remained a center of controversy for many decades. But it was never set aside, and as Brown notes, it became, quote, the second great high-water mark of early Christian theology. It set an imperishable standard for Orthodoxy, close quote, as it confessed the deity and humanity of Christ in the classic formulation of two natures, one person.

As such, it rejected all previous false Christological views and presented a positive understanding of Christ's identity in a series of statements. It clearly distinguished nature from person. The Brown In regard to person, it asserted that the active subject of the Incarnation, "the one and the same Christ," is none other than the Eternal Son, who is consubstantial with the Father and the Spirit, but who has now assumed a complete human nature so that he now subsists in two natures, natures that are not confused or changed, but retain all of their attributes.

The Creed of Chalcedon, the Chalcedonian definition states, and I quote, in agreement therefore with the Holy Fathers, we all unanimously teach that we should confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead and the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same of a rational soul and body, consubstantial with the Father in Godhead and the same consubstantial with us in manhood. Like us in all things except sin, begotten from the Father before the ages as regards his Godhead, and in the last days the same because of us and because of our salvation, begotten from the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, the God-bearer, as regards his manhood, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, made known in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. The first two withouts are against Eutychianism or Monophysitism, without confusion, without change.

The second two are against Nestorianism, without division, without separation. The difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union, but the property of each nature being preserved and coalescing in one prosopon and one hypostasis, one person, not parted or divided into two prosopopersons, but one and the same Son, only begotten, divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. As the prophets of old and Jesus Christ himself have taught us about him, and the creed of our fathers has handed down." Close quote.

The significance of Chalcedon and its main Christological points. Why is Chalcedon important? For this reason, it sought to summarize and address every problem that had plagued the church in regard to Christ's identity. It sought to curb speculation, to clarify the use of language between the East and West, and as such, it acts as a defensive definitive statement, pardon me, and roadmap for all later Christological reflection.

I wish that that had been so. We'll see in the modern period, it is commonly rejected, and what is put in its place is not good. There are Christologies from below, and Jesus is a mere man, no matter how great.

Chalcedon argued against docetism, adoptionism, modalism, Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, one at a time. It argued against docetism. The Lord Jesus was perfect in man-ness, manhood, man-ness, truly man, consubstantial, homoousian, with us according to his man-ness or humanity, and born of Mary.

Chalcedon argued against adoptionism. It argued for the personal subsistence of the Logos, quote, begotten of the Father before the ages, not a human being that God came and super indwelt and empowered, no, that God adopted, no. The Son was always the Son of the Father, the Father was always the Father of the Son.

Modalism, it distinguished the Son from the Father, both by the titles Father and Son, and by its reference to the Father having begotten the Son before the ages. Arianism, it affirmed that the Lord Jesus was perfect in deity, truly God. Apollinarianism, it confessed that the Lord Jesus was, quote, truly man of a reasonable soul and body, consubstantial with us according to his manhood in all things like unto us.

Remember, Apollinarius said Jesus took a human body but not a human soul. The Logos occupied that place in Jesus. Thus, Apollinarianism denies the complete humanity of Christ and thus threatens our salvation because the Redeemer had to be God to be able to save us and he had to become a human being to be able to save us, his fellow human beings, if you were, if you will.

He never was only a human being, merely one, but he became a genuine human, took to himself a genuine human nature. Nestorianism, it affirmed Mary as Theotokos, God-bearer, not in order to exalt Mary but in order to affirm Jesus' true deity and the fact of a real incarnation. The baby she carried in her womb was God.

He was the God embryo, the God fetus, the God baby. Incredible. In that way, she's the Theotokos by God's own providence.

She was the vehicle, the mother of our Lord as when Mary went to visit her cousin. Help me out here. As when Mary went to visit Elizabeth, that's right, Elizabeth said, the mother of my Lord, acknowledging even if she didn't understand it that Mary, by God's grace, was the God-bearer.

Doesn't exalt Mary or make her the object of prayer or intercession or worship or veneration or anything like that, but it emphasizes the baby in her womb was divine. The Chalcedonian definition also spoke of one and the same son and one person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons and whose natures are in union without division, without separation. The emphasis on sameness is actually tiring, opposing Nestorius.

Monophysitism confessed that in Christ, there were two natures without confusion and without change. The property of each nature is preserved and concurring in the one person. Chalcedon was a magnificent achievement.

Five points captured the heart of the definition. First, this is a message, a lecture on the five points, not of Calvinism, but of Chalcedonian orthodoxy. There is a little pun there for my reformed friends.

First, Christ was truly and perfectly God and man. Both the deity of Christ and his humanity are equally preserved and emphasized in order for him to serve as our great high priest and mediator and to win salvation for us. Second, person and hypostasis are viewed as the same thing.

In so doing, Chalcedon provides a clear distinction between person and nature. A person is seen as a principle in its own right, not deducible from nature or as a third element from the union of the two natures. A new person does not come into existence when human nature is assumed, nor does it result in two persons.

Instead, Chalcedon affirms that the person of the incarnation is the eternal son, the second person of the Godhead. Thus, I'll teach later on under systematics that the continuity of personhood in Christ is provided not by his humanity but by the fact that he is the eternal son. He's the pre-incarnate son and then he becomes the incarnate son.

Humanity is not continuous. It did not exist before the incarnation. Not only the deity is continuous, but the divine son is continuous.

There's no deity of him apart from him. So, it's the person of the son who takes a genuine human nature to himself. Furthermore, it's a person, not a nature, who became flesh.

That is why the incarnation is a personal act of the son who took the form of a servant, Hebrews 2:7, in a deliberate, voluntary, and sacrificial way. It is the person of the son who is the one acting agent and suffering subject. Does this imply a change in the son? Not in the sense that the person of the son changed his identity or ceased to be what he always was.

Even as the incarnate son, he continued to possess all the divine attributes and to perform all his divine functions and prerogatives. Nevertheless, again, as McLeod rightly notes, and I quote, there is real change. Change in the sense that in Christ, God enters upon a whole new range of experiences and relationships.

He experiences life in a human body and in a human soul. He experiences human pain and human temptations. He suffers poverty, loneliness, and humiliation.

He tastes death. 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.

That is what the incarnation made possible for God, a real personal experience of being human. Donald McLeod is a devout Christian man. He is speaking reverently with those words.

Third, Christ's human nature did not have a hypostasis slash person of its own. It was impersonal in the sense that there was not a man that God came and indwelt. Christ's human nature did not have a hypostasis or person of its own, which entails that Jesus would not have existed had the son not entered the womb of Mary.

Jesus would not have existed if the son had not entered Mary's womb. There was no man apart from this divine action. But as a result of this action, the son, who possessed a divine nature from all eternity, now adds to himself a human nature with a full set of human attributes, which allows him to live a fully human life.

Yet, he's not completely limited or circumscribed by his human nature. This is why, as Fairbairn reminds us, the fathers of the church spoke of God the Son doing some things qua God as God and other things qua man as man. The same person did things that were appropriate for humanity and other things that were appropriate or even possible only for God.

But the person who did these things was the same God the son. Thus, Jesus is far more than a man who's merely indwelt by God the Son. He is God the Son, living on earth as a man, accomplishing our redemption as the Lord.

One of the entailments of Chalcedon, which certainly is true to scripture, is that whenever we look at the life of Christ and ask, who did this? Who said this? Who

suffered death for us? The answer is always the same. God the Son. Why? Because it is not the divine or human nature that acts and thus does things.

Rather, it's the person of the son acting in and through his divine and human natures. It is the son who was born, baptized, tempted, transfigured, betrayed, arrested, condemned, and died. It was the son who shed his blood for us to secure our salvation.

It is in the Son that all of God's righteous demands are met so that our salvation is ultimately of God. It is the son who also rose from the dead and who now reigns as king of kings and lord of lords. Once again, McLeod, I told you that Donald McLeod's book, *The Person of Christ*, was my standard required textbook ever since it was published.

Quoting him again, "in him, the son, God provides and even becomes the atonement which he demands. In him, in his flesh, within the finitude of his lifetime, the finitude of his body, and the finitude of his human being, God dealt with our sin. He is a man, yet the man of universal significance, not because his humanity is in any sense infinite, but because it is the humanity of God. In him, God lives a truly human existence." McLeod, *Person of Christ*, page 190.

Fourth, there is no union of the natures that obscures the integrity of either nature. Within God the Son incarnate, the creator-creature distinction is preserved. There's no blend of natures or transfer of attributes, *communicatio idiomatum*, producing some kind of *tertium quid*, some kind of third something else. Yet, this does not entail that the two natures are merely juxtaposed, lying side by side without contact or interaction.

Instead, there is a transfer of attributes in that the attributes of both natures coexist in one person. This is why scripture can say the son of God incarnate can simultaneously uphold the universe, Colossians 1:17, forgive sin, Mark 2:10, become hungry and thirsty, grow in wisdom and knowledge, Luke 2:52, and even die. One more time, this is why scripture can say God the son incarnate can at the same time uphold the universe, Colossians 1:17, forgive sin, Mark 2:10, forgive sin in a way we can't forgive sin.

It's not like, Jack, I'm sorry, brother, would you please forgive me? No, it's like, man, your sins are forgiven you. And so that the world might know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins, an invisible miracle. I'll do a visible one, Jesus says.

Take up your bed and walk. That's the way he forgives sins. He forgives sins as God forgives sinners.

At the same time, this divine-human person who upholds the universe and forgives sin becomes hungry and thirsty. He's sitting at the well in John 4 because he's tired from his journey. He grows in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man, Luke 2:52, and even he could even die, and he did.

This is why the son is the subject of the incarnation in all of his acts and experiences, involving both natures, each in its own distinctive way. As Karl Barth would later express this point in the incarnate Son "God himself speaks when this man speaks in human speech. God himself acts and suffers when this man acts and suffers as a man. God himself triumphs when this one triumphs as a man." *Church Dogmatics* 4.2.

Fifth, the son took to himself a complete human nature, which was comprised of a rational soul and body. Chalcedon insists that Jesus' humanity, in order to be complete humanity, had to be more than a body.

It had to consist of a full human psychology similar to our own. Chalcedon then clearly distinguishes a person from the soul, and it locates the soul as part of human nature. In doing so, it insists on the word man Christology, not merely the word flesh Christology.

The word didn't take to himself merely human flesh, but a complete human nature consisting of body and soul. It rejects the idea that the son replaces the human soul. The son or the logos replaces it and implicitly asserts that Christ had a human will and mind, didn't explicitly say it, that comes out later in patristic Christology.

As you might imagine, when somebody didn't, when people denied it, controversy theology all over the place. It implicitly asserts Christ had a human will and mind, even though this latter affirmation is not formulated or formalized until the sixth ecumenical council in 681. In a nutshell, these five points capture the heart of the Chalcedonian definition.

Even though the creed is not identical to scripture in authority, nevertheless, it is a statement that sets forth the basic points we must confess, articulate, and defend in regard to Christ's identity. As a confessional statement, it establishes the parameters the church must theologize within in order to capture accurately the Jesus of the Bible. As Chalcedon's preamble asserts, it was written against the backdrop of scripture and the entire patristic tradition.

And as Grillmeier notes, "few councils have been so rooted in tradition as the council of Chalcedon, close quote. In this way, as Brown acknowledges, Harold O.J. Brown, the Chalcedonian definition quote, became our standard for measuring orthodoxy, where either its affirmation of Christ's deity or of his humanity is rejected. It means that historic orthodoxy has been abandoned. The creed of Chalcedon is not a

theological program, but rather a set of limits beyond its confines. Theology almost invariably will degenerate into skepticism, unbelief, or heresy." *Creeds, Councils, and Christ* is the name of Brown's book.

With that said, however, there has been a sustained attack upon the definition, especially since the Enlightenment era. Most of these attacks are due to the rejection of historic Christianity and its replacement with other worldviews. Yet some from within the church have also criticized it, both Catholic and Protestant.

Let us briefly turn to some of those criticisms as we conclude patristic Christology. First, some have criticized Chalcedon for its dependence on Greek philosophical thinking in the use of such terminology as *ousia*, *apostasis*, *et cetera*, *essence*, *being*, *nature*, and so forth, *person*. As the criticism goes, due to this influence, biblical teaching has inadvertently been distorted, and Christology is reduced to metaphysical speculation.

For a number of reasons, this criticism is inaccurate. On the one hand, the issue is not the use of extra-biblical philosophical language since all theologizing inevitably does so. Instead, the issue is whether that language, whatever century it's taken from, leads to a distortion of biblical language and teaching.

On the other hand, even though fifth-century words were employed, Chalcedon uses them in very un-Greek ways. For example, as presented, nowhere in Greek thought is the nature-person distinction made. But the church distinguished between *ousia*, *nature*, and *apostasis*, *person* because scripture demanded it.

In addition, as MacLeod perceptively notes, the theology of Chalcedon is radically un-Greek. Quoting Donald MacLeod's *Person of Christ*, quote, Greek theology was sympathetic to the idea of theophanies, gods in human form, and to the idea of divine adoptions, in which a god might take control of a human personality. But Chalcedon is the language of incarnation.

It speaks of the enfleshment of a divine person. Here, God himself enters upon an earthly, historical existence so that we can say that this man is the son of God and that in this particular individual, God lives a truly human life. That goes far beyond both theophany and adoption.

That, as far as I can see, MacLeod said, is a profoundly un-Greek concept, close quote. But this criticism goes further, Wellum argues, related to the above objection to the question of whether it's necessary to continue to employ the same words Chalcedon used or whether we can translate 5th-century terminology in the contemporary language. That's the issue.

Is it possible, for example, to translate *apostasis* and *ousia* and the metaphysics that undergirds them into more current vocabulary? In theory, most would agree with MacLeod that it's possible, as he reminds us, it is no more difficult to lift the language of *ousia*, *fysis*, and *apostasis* into our own time than it was to lift the language of St. Paul, *morphe*, *homoionoma*, and *acone*, for example. Yet, the translation issue is not easy, especially when people are simply not simply translating old terminology into new but actually changing the meaning of the terms. Second, Chalcedon has also been charged with being dualistic.

It appears to place the two natures side by side within the one person, with each nature retaining its own attributes, retaining its own attributes, thus leading to the practice of attributing some aspects of Jesus' existence to his human nature and others to his divine nature, without any specific relationship between them. So, for example, in the case of impassibility and immutability, Leo affirms, and many others following him, that Jesus, quote, was capable of death in one nature and incapable of it in the other, close quote. Chalcedon teaches that the historical Jesus has a kind of dual existence as God and as a man.

How do we make coherent sense of this? In truth, answering this objection takes us to the heart of theologizing about the Incarnation. How one answers this criticism distinguishes various Christological formulations. It's enough to say at this point that the reason why Chalcedon was necessary was to avoid various heretical attempts to answer this question unbiblically.

In fact, Chalcedon serves as a warning and guard against the attempt to overcome dualism. Chalcedon, along with Scripture, holds in tension the unity of the one divine person, the Son, who, as a result of the Incarnation, now subsists. He lives, he exists in two natures.

Scripture and Chalcedon refuse to blend the dual natures of Christ or surrender the unity of the person acting in and through these natures. Also, as McLeod insists, Chalcedon does positively insist, quote, on the existential unity of the person Jesus. It emphasizes that although there are two natures, there is but one hypostasis or *prosopon*, one person.

This means that without claiming to solve the problem, unity is stressed without pretending to explain it. In other words, it respects the mystery. I return to the place where I started.

Two gigantic mysteries are revealed in the Bible: God's threeness in oneness and the two natures in the person of Christ. In the end, Chalcedon makes clear that we must affirm, as Scripture does, that all the actions of Christ are the actions of the person. He is the agent of all the actions, speaker of all the words, and subject of all the experiences.

As a result, Chalcedon does not parcel out our Lord's actions, words, and experiences as between the two natures. In truth, it seeks to do justice to the Bible's presentation of Christ without resolving the dualism perfectly. As such, it serves as a warning to all those who attempt to do so.

To explain the mystery is to transgress. If there are truly divinely revealed mysteries, we make affirmations, we exclude errors, and then we respect our own ignorance and the Bible's paradoxes, its mysteries, its antinomies. I never found a good word to express that.

Third, similar to the charge of dualism, Chalcedon is often criticized for being docetic despite affirming the full humanity of Christ. Where does this charge arise? From the fact that the Creed states it's unassumed human nature without a human person, that is, a hypostasis, that is, an impersonal humanity. And as the objection goes, how meaningful is the ascription to Christ of a full and complete nature, including a human mind and will, if that nature cannot function as ours does, that is, not normally as ours does with a human person? How do we affirm the self-activating character of the man Jesus without giving rise to two subjects or two persons and thus falling prey to the Nestorian heresy? And is not Chalcedon's denial of Christ having a human person an implicit admission of docetism? At the heart of this charge is making sense of Jesus' human limitations, specifically his limitations of knowledge and power.

See Mark 13:32, Luke 2:52, if the acting subject of the Incarnation is the Divine Son. I'll take this up later during systematics, but for now it's crucial to remember that Chalcedon's affirmation of an hypostasia was not saying that anything was lacking in Christ's humanity, instead it was a denial of two acting subjects of Christ and thus a rejection of Nestorianism. There was not a separate man. That's the point of it.

In that sense, his human nature was impersonal. I don't like the way the church said that because it never was impersonal, it was non-existent, and then from the very nanosecond of its existence in Mary's womb, it was in-personal by virtue of union with the Word. And yet I get their point, but their point leads to this criticism which is not just in the end.

To affirm the existence of a human person alongside the person of the Son would mean that Jesus was not, in fact, the Incarnate Son but simply a man who was especially friendly with the Son. Furthermore, given Chalcedon used person in an ontological, not psychological, sense, it is not denying the completeness of Christ's human psychology since that is part of his human nature. Rather Chalcedon is affirming that the one active subject of the human experiences of Christ was a divine Son and thus a real incarnation had taken place.

So, do I like an hypostasia? No, that the Son's humanity was impersonal. I don't like it, but I get what it says. There was not a separate man, Jesus, that God came and indwelt.

No, on the other hand, his humanity was never a separate person, and it was never impersonal in the sense that from the get-go, its personality was the personality of the divine Son who took to himself true humanity. Thus, Jesus human nature was in hyphen personal. Where does this now leave us? E.L. Maskell states it well, "Chalcedon is the truth and nothing but the truth but it's not the whole truth."

In other words, Chalcedon sets the parameters and puts in place the guardrails by which Christological discussion now takes place. Would that it would have stayed within the guardrails, the guardrails. Wait till you see.

Oh, my word. Ultimately, it is only scripture that can serve as our final authority, but we neglect the Chalcedonian definition at our peril. What is needed is further reflection on scripture in light of Chalcedon, and in fact, this is precisely what occurred in the subsequent years of church history.

Chalcedon did not end all Christological discussion. Instead, it continued to guide and direct further thought in light of more questions and challenges. This concludes my survey of patristic Christology.

I'm going to do a little introduction to modern Christology. Some background and I jump a little bit out of time order and perhaps you'll see why. The lives of Jesus movement.

The most tangible result of a new attitude toward the Bible, namely a critical one, in the 19th century, we're going to go beyond that to the 18th century to be sure, was the rash of lives of Jesus that were produced. The 19th century as a whole was dominated by a dramatic renewal of interest in historical things as well as breakthroughs in historical methodology, and the 18th century showed little interest in these matters.

Descartes argued that history had neither the certainty of philosophy nor the precision of science. Voltaire, by reputation as the greatest historian of his time, spent most of his life in philosophy and only at the end turned to matters of history. Kant was not merely disinterested in history, and he also depreciated it.

The 19th century saw a dramatic reversal of these attitudes. In Hegel and Marx, history became the means of doing philosophy. For Hegel, it exhibited how the rational principles by which reality is structured have been unfolded for our study.

For Marx, history exhibited those principles by which all societies have been determined and in light of which the future can be predicted. Although Marx boasted he had stood Hegel on his head, his high estimation of the significance of history for human understanding was very similar to Hegel's. This renewal, in turn, stimulated the search for more acceptable methods of study which would win respectability for the subject.

In scholars like von Ranke, it resulted in vigorous analysis of source material, a confidence that scientific techniques and objectivity could be transferred to historical analysis, and oftentimes an extraordinary confidence in the capacities of human nature. The problem, of course, is that human affairs are not susceptible to scientific analysis in the same way that the laws of gravity are. The so-called objective techniques that the positivist historians used yielded a diversity of interpretations, which became as much an embarrassment as it would if scientists today kept reaching entirely different conclusions about how gravity works.

In the meantime, however, the new enthusiasm for history coupled with the new techniques for its study crossed over into theology, where they were merged into the critical studies being done on scripture. It was this cross-pollination of disciplines that produced the lives of Jesus' literature. It is also important, however, to note the mood in which this literature flourished.

It was nowhere better expressed than in Adolph Harnack's *What is Christianity?* Published at the turn of the 20th century. Harnack's book was nurtured within an almost tragic sense that for masses of modern people, Jesus had become an irrelevance. He was as irrelevant to them as the age in which he lived.

What Harnack tried to do, therefore, was to capture the meaning of Christianity as an idea. An idea which had been realized in and through Jesus but was not itself defined by or limited to Jesus. Here lay the nub of Harnack's analysis and this was the program of Protestant liberalism.

Christianity was historical in the sense that it came to focus in Jesus but it was not historical in the sense that Jesus defined its meaning. This formulation was carried out with apologetic motives the hope being that the Christianity which resulted would accord more easily within the norms assumed norms of its to quote Schleiermacher cultured despisers. What is of interest however is that Harnack claimed that he reached his conclusions by quote the methods of historical science close quote and not as an apologist or religious philosopher which in fact he was without knowing it.

It's the inherent blindness of modernism. In both continental Europe and Britain writing lives of Jesus became a vogue. Among the Victorians, says Daniel Powles, this

was a subject quote to which every type of writer, devotional, radical, clerical, or eccentric was sooner or later attracted close quote.

In Europe it produced new well new well-known works by David Strauss, Christian Weisse, Bruno Bauer, Ernest Renan and Maurice Gauguier among others. In Britain, the studies by J.R. Seeley, Richard Hansen, F.W. Farrar, and Alfred Edersheim, a conservative one, were among the more widely circulated. Albert Schweitzer was the one who took it upon himself to axe this movement.

Schweitzer seems to be a reluctant unbeliever, but he was a genius with doctorates in music, medicine, and theology who went to Africa on medical missions and ended up worshipping the creation. I ended up a pantheist. After a thorough and at times tedious review of works written mainly in Germany he concluded that the authors had quote played fast and loose with true history close quote reading into the gospel accounts an imaginary and idealized picture of Jesus.

Indeed, the Jesus who emerged from most of these studies was so like the liberal authors who wrote them that Schweitzer observed they must have been looking down the long well of human history and seen their own faces reflected at the bottom. He was a genius. He also concluded Jesus was the false prophet.

Being a genius doesn't save anybody. Compare first Corinthians one not many geniuses are saved. Perhaps it magnifies the grace of God to save more mere mortals than geniuses I don't know.

There Jesus was "a figure designed by rationalism endowed with life by liberalism and clothed by modern theology in a historical garb." Oh boy, is he good? It was a figure who has now "fallen to pieces, close quote, battered by the concrete historical problems" which resulted in this quote being half historical, half modern. Jesus Schweitzer concluded that he would never be able to meet the theological expectation expectations that had inspired his construction.

The fundamental mistake Schweitzer charged was to suppose that Jesus could mean more if he were dressed up as a modern person than if he were left as he really was. The real significance of the movement was not in its historical discoveries. These were, at best, minimal.

This enterprise was, in fact, an elaborate attempt at breaking the bonds of traditional doctrine, an attempt undertaken on enlightenment premises. History, it was thought, was the key to reality. This was an extraordinarily naive supposition that foundered on the hard rock of reality and had its demise unceremoniously declared by Schweitzer.

The abysmal failure of the movement, however, wounded the theological community. It is a wound that, to this day, has refused to heal. In our next lecture I'll begin talking about liberal Protestantism.

This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christology. This is session 5, Patristic Christology, Part 4, Monophysitism and the Council of Chalcedon.