

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 5, Introduction, Part 5, History of Doctrine and Christology**

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christ's saving work. This is session 5, Introduction, Part 5, History of Doctrine and Christology.

Welcome as we continue our lectures on the history of the doctrine of the atonement.

We have thought about the early church in the West and said that the ransom to Satan view predominated. In the East, the deification dominated, although both East and West, the figures are more complicated than that. We've talked about Anselm and Abelard in the Middle Ages with very different views and then Luther and Calvin in the Reformation.

We're ready for responses to the Reformation and the first one is Faustus Socinus, 1539-1604. I want to give credit to Anthony Thistleton's Systematic Theology and H. Dermot McDonald's book on the atonement of the death of Christ, his strong historical section. An immediate and vigorous protest against the forensic or legal and punitive, that is penal, view of the atonement so strongly stated by the reformers came in the form of the volume *De Jesu Christo Salvatore* by Faustus Socinus, that is concerning Jesus Christ the Savior.

The work was composed to answer a reformed pastor, Covetus, and it was just a disavowal of what Calvin believed and Luther for that matter. The whole effort of Socinus was to deny Christ's deity and that, therefore that his death had any atoning value. In case you're wondering, yes, Socinians and Socinianism come from Laelius and Faustus Socinus, the uncle and the nephew.

Names were latinized, their Italian names were Laelio and Fausto Socini, but he'll be forever remembered, there it goes, as Faustus Socinus. His view of sin was Pelagian, that is, Adam was a bad example to the human race, and that's about it. His view of Christ was that of Arian, who denied the deity of Christ, so it is no wonder he has a defective view of the atonement.

But this view continues to this day because Socinianism joined with Unitarianism to form the UU's, the Unitarian Universalist Church. If you want to critique their views, their beliefs, and many other cultic beliefs, my friend Alan Gomes of Talbot Theological Seminary has edited 14-15 volumes for Zondervan on world religions and cults, and Alan himself, who's an expert, did the volume on Unitarian Universalism.

Socinus disregarded justice altogether in stating the way in which Christ's saving action was done.

If we could but get rid of this justice, even if we have no other proof, thus this fiction of Christ's satisfaction would be thoroughly exposed and would vanish. In his critical rejection of the reformed statements, the idea of satisfaction excludes the idea of mercy in his estimation. In Pelagian fashion, Socinus declared sin a personal matter.

It cannot be set to another's account. It is not true that the sin of Adam is imputed to the human race. So, Socinus said.

Paul, of course, thinks otherwise in Romans 5:12-19. God has left his justice aside, Socinus said, for the full display of his mercy. The fact of the resurrection proves that Christ did not suffer vicariously and that no saving value lies in his death.

It is not on the cross, get a load of this, but in heaven that he makes oblation. This is astonishing to me. Reading the Bible, surely one would never get the idea that Christ made atonement in hell, as the word of faith name acclaiming teachers teach, or that he made atonement in heaven as Socinianism teaches.

Goodness gracious. Christ's sufferings were disciplinary, not judicial. Nothing could be more absurd than this idea of satisfaction.

The premise of Socinus's view is that everything in God is subject to his will. There is, therefore, in God no necessary justice, which absolutely requires sin's punishment. Quoting Socinus, there is no such justice in God as requires absolutely and inexorably that sin be punished and such as God himself cannot repudiate.

As it is with God's justice, so it is with his mercy. Both are subject to his will. Thus, he has the right either to punish or to pardon according to his will.

Since God wills to forgive, there's no need for satisfaction of his justice. In other words, the cross is not necessary to bring forgiveness. The significance of Christ, you might be wondering, is that he assures forgiveness. He does not procure it.

He's the savior indeed in that he announces to us the way of eternal life. Christ takes away sins not by making atonement for them on the cross, according to Socinus, but by reason of the fact he's able to move men by his most ample promises to exercise that penitence whereby their sins are blotted out. For Socinus, Christ's saving significance is consequently moved from his death to his heavenly life.

Ultimately, therefore, Christ is but the announcer and supreme example of the way of people's salvation. He's the moral teacher par excellence. We're going to see later

today, Lord willing, in Jesus' first of three offices, he is the prophet par excellence, but he's also the priest who makes atonement for our sins in his death.

Because of Socinus' faulty view of the person of Christ, denying his deity, he, therefore, necessarily has a defective view of the atonement because only God can save. According to Socinus, God did not need satisfaction. Christ did not make atonement.

All we need is a new divine idea to enlighten us, and that is exactly what Christ brings. I do not throw the word heretic around freely, all right. To me, heresy is not simply an error.

My own chart of degrees of error starts with mistaken opinions, which we all have, and even isolated errors, which we all have. But then it moves to systemic errors. According to the system of theology known as Reformed Theology or Calvinism, our Arminian brothers and sisters, notice how I speak of them, are guilty of systemic error.

According to the system of theology known as Arminianism, their Calvinist brothers and sisters are guilty of systemic error. That is, in those two systems of thought, doctrines influence other doctrines. So, there is a systemic truth or error going on, depending upon one's perspective.

So, mistaken opinions, errors, systemic errors, and a major cleft, and then heresy. Because heresy is not merely a systemic error, heresy is a damning doctrine.

It is believing errors that cut one oneself off from grace and salvation. You say, but even denying the deity of Christ, which is a terrible thing, doesn't change who Jesus is. No, it does not change who Jesus is.

He is still the God-man who made atonement for sin and rose again on the third day, whether Socinus or anybody else says so or not. But I cannot believe in him correctly for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life if I do not relate to him, not only as a creature to my creator but as a sinner to my God. That is, believing in Christ for salvation entails believing he is able to forgive my sins and give me eternal life.

And that means at least implicitly acknowledging his deity. Is not an explicit acknowledgment of his deity better? Yes, but it's an explicit denial of his deity that cuts one off from grace. A person could know nothing, and I used to use the far reaches of the globe for somebody who knows nothing, but now it can be in the good old US of A, somebody who knows nothing of God or the Bible.

And if they learn they're a sinner in need of God's grace, that Jesus died and rose again to save sinners, and if they trust Christ alone to make them right with God,

they can know God and be forgiven. What I'm trying to say is that there is an implicit acknowledgment of Jesus' deity in that I'm trusting him as able to forgive me. Perhaps this person later on will learn explicitly that the Son of God existed before the incarnation, that he became one of us in his incarnation, and that he is God and man in one person.

But, I'll say it again: an outright denial of his deity cuts one off from grace. This is the heresy or damning error of the cults. Could a person be in a cult and be a believer? The answer is yes, if they believe in something contrary to the cult's teachings and trust Christ in spite of that false teaching.

Our next post-reformation historical theologian worthy of note is Hugo Grotius. It is also correctly pronounced Grotius, from which we get the governmental view of the atonement, or using his name, the Grotian view of the atonement. And remind me to tell you a funny story when this one is over.

He is not a heretic, he is not a heretic, but he made some significant errors. He was a very bright man. Grotius held an immediate position among the defenders of the reformed doctrine; Luther and Calvin are both reformational in that way and the views, the faulty views of Socinus.

He begins, Grotius begins by upholding the basic reform contention that satisfaction was necessary for God justly to exercise mercy. Grotius declares his intention of refuting Socinus. However, Grotius accepts with Socinus that justice is not an inherent necessity of the divine nature.

Quote, it is not something inward in God or in the divine will and nature, but only the effect of his will. That is an error. God is holy, just, faithful, truthful, omnipresent, omnipotent, and on and on.

He is just, he is holy. God indeed declared the law, but he's still above it and has,, therefore,, the right over it. This is not an outright disregard of the law as in Socinus.

This is a manipulation of the law, a lessening of the law's demands. Consequently, Grotius views God in the matter of salvation, not as a judge, but rather as a ruler, hence the name governmental theory, because Christ's death in the end, for Grotius, is in the best interest of God's moral government. It's complicated, and he uses biblical language to such a degree that many people would be fooled by reading his dense writings in the first place.

This relationship to God, of God to human beings, as governor over the governed, has occasioned the title as I said, the governmental view of the atonement. God is not the judge who punishes Christ with the punishment that sinners deserve. He rather is the ruler who can either abrogate or alter his law.

He does not abrogate it, but he alters the law for the commendable reasons of his own glory and people's salvation. God has thus relaxed the law. He has toned it down, quoting Grotius, all positive laws are relaxable.

In the context of this relationship of relaxed law, Grotius develops his view of punishment. Christ's punishment was required in the interest of God's government. Quote, it is to be observed that it is essential to punishment that it be inflicted for sin, but not usually essential that it be inflicted on the sinner himself.

Grotius then presents Christ's work as a sacrifice of satisfaction to the necessities of the relaxed law. It's hard for us to even follow this, isn't it? It is. He accepts Socinius's criticism of the penal doctrine of Christ's sufferings as an exact equivalent for the divine penalty of sin.

However, since the law has been relaxed or toned down, the idea that punishment need not correspond exactly to the transgression follows. The government of God cannot be maintained unless there is reverence for law. The death of Christ is consequently a signal exhibition of this regard for the law and the heinous guilt of having broken it.

There is, Grotius wrote, nothing unjust in this, that God, whose is the highest authority in all matters to use the will, he's the highest, excuse me, authority in all matters, not in themselves unjust, and is himself subject to no law, will to use the sufferings and death of Christ to establish a weighty example against the immense guilt of us all with whom Christ was most closely allied by nature, by sovereignty, by security, close quote. Christ, however, did not bear the exact penalty for sins, but get a load of this, quoting, the substitute for a penalty. The sufferings and death of Christ met the requirements of God's law as God had relaxed them for the sake of human beings.

This is not penal substitution. This is, ironically, a substitute for penal substitution. Jesus becomes instead a penal example.

God is not the judge who punished his son with the judgment that sinners deserve. God is the moral governor who punished the son as an example of the punishment that sin deserves. It's not a heresy, but it is not a clear, it's a clear evasion of penal substitution in the language of penal substitution.

I'll tell you a funny story. The man who taught me systematic theology trained many men in previous years for the Bible Presbyterian Church. A young man and graduate under this wonderful teacher named Robert J. Dunzweiler came before his presbytery for ordination, and in his theology exam, he did a splendid job with one exception.

He put forth the Grotian or governmental view of the atonement. He dotted his governmental I's and crossed his governmental T's, and the committee said, young man, your exam is good except in one particular. You have set forth a defective view of the atonement, and the young man was taken aback.

He said, who is your teacher? Robert Dunzweiler. Oh, he is a wonderful man of God. He trained many of us.

I can't understand it. It's right there in his notes. I can picture it in my mind at the top of a page.

Well, young man, we're going to take a break for lunch. You come back after lunch and show us those notes, and so he did, and he was exactly right. At the top of the page, it said the governmental view of the atonement, and at the bottom of the previous page, it said false views of the atonement.

That is a true story. We move to the more modern period with the father of modern theology still pursuing the history of the doctrine of the atonement. Thank you for your perseverance, you saints who are listening to this and watching it.

Friedrich Schleiermacher has been called the father of modern theology. Another brilliant man. His dates are 1768 to 1834.

As in the case of many liberal theologians, he had accepted an orthodox view of the atonement in his youth as a pietist. Later, he combined a liberal interpretation of orthodox faith with an appreciation of Kant and Romanticism. He tried to hold together the person and work of Christ.

He wrote, quote that the peculiar and exclusive activity of the Redeemer implies each other, and we are inseparably one in the self-consciousness of believers. That is a hint at his notion of emphasizing feeling in religion, and indeed, the consciousness of believers becomes his canon almost within the canon of the Bible. Schleiermacher wrote, quote, the Redeemer then is like all men in virtue of the identity of human nature but is distinguished from them all by the constant potency of his God-consciousness, which was a veritable existence of God in him.

This is Schleiermacher's key, the God-consciousness within believers. In general, Schleiermacher rejected notions of substitution and expiation and held an exemplarist or moral influence view of the atonement, roughly in effect following Abelard. Christ's suffering for Schleiermacher was, quote, an absolutely self-denying love.

Another liberal theologian and more recent is Albrecht Ritschl, R-I-T-S-C-H-L, 1822 to 1889. Ritschl has traditionally been regarded as a typical 19th-century liberal theologian. Again, a gifted man and very influential.

Ritschl takes closer account of biblical material than Schleiermacher, but in the end, he tends to offer an account of the atonement that has perhaps more in common with Abelard than with Anselm, that is, that it's more subjective than objective, and I'll review those concepts. An objective view of the atonement says Christ accomplished something, things outside of us, and we need to believe in him and what he did in order to be saved. A subjective view of the atonement says what he did, he acted to move us within, so his influence is that of a moral example or a moral influence.

Truthfully, our view of the atonement should start outside of us with an objective understanding, but it should certainly move toward an internal understanding if we are to be saved, but the most important is the external, and that is what we begin with the objective view. Then we move toward the subjective by actually personally trusting Christ as Lord and Savior, trusting him who died and rose again to save us. Ritual seeks to stress the interrelatedness of Christ's person and work, seeing the establishment of the kingdom of God in mainly ethical terms, but primarily through his work as prophet, priest, and king.

This threefold vocation entails his sufferings, but Christ is not, according to ritual, the bearer of vicarious punishment. He represents as a priest the community of the kingdom, and as prophet and king, he conveys God's, exemplary love. I'm trying to remember a hymn, and it comes and goes in my mind.

Ah, when I survey the wondrous cross. We profitably use this hymn because we bring to the hymn an objective understanding of the work of Christ, but the hymn is largely subjective. Watch what I mean.

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and poor contempt on all my pride. Is that good? Yes, but it assumes that outside of me, Jesus loved me and gave himself for me. Understand? What this is doing is, it's a meditation.

It is a subjective meditation assuming an objective cross and resurrection. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God. All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood.

See from his head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down. Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown? Were that whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small? Love so amazing, so divine,

demands my soul, my life, my all. It is a subjective hymn and a beautiful one because God's people bring to it the knowledge that Jesus died and arose outside of us.

So, do we need such hymns? Yes, we do. We need for the atonement to end up affecting us subjectively, but that is different than purely or mainly subjective views of the atonement that liberalism presents because Jesus is not really a savior but an example. And I'll say that again too.

The New Testament does present Jesus as an example, but Martin Luther said it well. Jesus is our example, he wrote, but not first of all. First of all, he's God's gift, gabe, that he gave to us.

And then secondly, he is our example, our example that we should follow. Once we believe in him as God's gift and receive him as Lord and Savior, then yes, we follow his example in order to live for him, but we don't follow his example in order to become Christians. We believe to become Christians because faith comes by hearing and hearing the word about Christ.

Gustaf Aulen, I mentioned him a number of times and his famous book *Christus Victor*. 1879, Aulen lived to 1977. This Swedish theologian of note wrote the classic work *Christus Victor*.

That word classic is thrown around, but *Christus Victor*, the book, is indeed a theological classic. He subtitled it, *An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*. An historical study, so it's not a biblical work, it's a work of historical theology, of the three main types of the idea of the atonement.

He wanted to move away from the well-worn debate of the objective or conservative view versus the subjective or liberal view by introducing a third approach which regarded it, Christ's atonement, as Christ's victory over evil forces, or the atonement, quoting Aulen, as a divine conflict and victory. Aulen called this the classic and dramatic view of the New Testament and the church fathers. Is he right? In part, he is right.

Aulen appealed especially to Irenaeus. He had declared that Christ came, quote, that he might destroy sin, overcome death, and give life to men. Irenaeus is against heresies.

Aulen did not regard the main issue as any infringement of justice, that's penal substitution, but at the cross to, quote, overcome tyrants which hold man in bondage. Aulen appealed to most of the fathers, including Origen, Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, and Leo, he also appealed to all New Testament passages that mention ransom or evil power. For example, Mark

10.45, the famous ransom saying, 1 Corinthians 2:6, Colossians 2:15. His most controversial argument is that Luther returns to the classic type.

Well, Luther did teach Christus Victor. There it is again. This book is so influential that the name of this book has become a technical term in Christian theology, used by everybody.

It's called the Christus Victor view of the atonement, and it's right, and he was right. Furthermore, liberals, with their subjective views, didn't emphasize this. Conservatives, with their objective penal substitution, didn't emphasize this, but he is wrong to make it the only view of Luther.

No. As I said yesterday, Paul Outhouse, in his impressive book, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, says Luther held two main views equally, penal substitution and Christus Victor, and that is true. Being in the Lutheran tradition, for some reason, Aulen totally ignored Calvin, and it is true that predominant in Calvin was the penal substitution view, but Calvin taught Christus Victor.

As a matter of fact, that's how I learned it. Calvin pointed me to the Bible, and you'll see later on, when we get to the pictures of the atonement, Christus Victor is all over the place. I already said it was in the first mention of redemption in Genesis 3:15. So, Aulen correctly revives a biblical theme, and for that we are glad.

He incorrectly overdoes it and oversimplifies the Fathers, Luther, and the Bible. I cannot believe it. He correctly says that Hebrews 2:15 teaches Christus Victor's view of atonement.

The son took to himself flesh and blood in order that through death, he might destroy the devil and redeem the people of God. Destroy the one who holds the power of death and liberate Christians. That is true, but then to say the main view of the atonement of Hebrews is Christus Victor is outlandish.

The main view of Hebrews of Christ's atonement is sacrifice. It is the main place in the whole Bible to learn of sacrifice, especially against the Old Testament background of sacrifice, which, perhaps in part because of his Lutheran heritage and a downplaying of the Old Testament, Aulen ignores the Old Testament. So, a helpful work? Oh, yes.

And has he taught us something? Oh, yes. Christus Victor is so important for encouraging people, including believers, who are addicted to various things. Christ is our champion who has overcome.

He is God and man in one person who sets his people free. It is a wonderful theme for the gospel and for the Christian life. Later on, I'll say I believe strongly in penal substitution, but it's not the only biblical view of the work of Christ.

And God gave us six big pictures. We need to become acquainted with them and use them then as tools for evangelism and discipleship according to the needs of the persons to whom we minister. So, kudos to Aulen, but yet criticisms of the man and his good work at the same time.

One more is the contemporary theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg, 1928 to 2014. I'm relying on Tony Thistleton's critique. Pannenberg rightly interweaves the person and work of Christ to which he devotes three extensive chapters or nearly 200 pages in the second volume of his systematic theology.

He begins with the starting point, quote, only God himself could be behind this event. That is by sending his son into the world. Galatians 4:4, Romans 8:3. But Pannenberg does not restrict his treatment of the atonement only to volume one, volume two of his systematic theology.

He provides an extensive discussion in his earlier book, *Jesus, God, and man*. On the cross, he declares that Jesus died a vicarious death, quote, it could only be understood as dying for us, for our sins. The substitutionary nature of his death is seen not only in Mark 10:45, Jesus laid down his life as a ransom for many, but also in 2 Corinthians 5:21, that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Galatians 3:13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. Pannenberg, like his mentor, Barth, devoted much effort and energy to biblical exegesis. Jesus Christ, Pannenberg wrote, quote, is the new man, the eschatological Adam, close quote.

But Christ is also the self-revelation of God, seen fully in the light of, and I might add, only in the light of, his resurrection. His death was an expiation for human sins, which removes, quote, the offense, the guilt, and the consequences, close quote, of sin. Quoting him one last time, the innocent suffered the penalty of death.

This vicarious penal suffering, the vicarious suffering of the wrath of God at sin, rests on the fellowship that Jesus Christ accepted with all of us as sinners, and with our fate as such. So there's much good in Pannenberg, and yet I am cautioned by Robert Lethem, the evangelical reform theologian, who has written a very recent and very helpful systematic theology, and who has gotten into the minds of Moltmann and Pannenberg to name the two most important influential, maybe, certainly German, and maybe totally influential of all theologians alive today, although now Pannenberg has passed away. Robert Lethem cautions us that, did Pannenberg really confess the resurrection of Jesus? The answer is yes, and that is remarkable for a

more mainline theologian, and yet everything so is tied to the future that you get the idea that, are these things true and did they happen? Yes, but they will only be ultimately true in the future.

I don't mean ultimately realized either in the future. So again, as I said yesterday in a previous lecture with reference to Emil Brunner's good teaching, his epistemology is skewed, and it raises problems for us. It is so, it is also true with Pannenberg, more with Moltmann, but with Pannenberg as well, that there's much good, but we have to be careful at the same time.

We have finally finished the history of the doctrine of the atonement. We move now to a study of Christology. As a number of the historical figures emphasized, the person and work of Christ are inseparable, and so, although this course is largely on the work of Christ, we cannot ignore his person. not only that, we should deliberately think about his person somewhat at least as preparation.

This is still working with the introduction. The last point, as a matter of fact, on the introduction before we get to the saving work of Christ itself. Christology.

I have three things to say. The person and work of Christ are inseparable. I want to think about Christ's saving work and the Trinity and then the important two-states doctrine.

First of all, the person and work of Christ are inseparable. The classic New Testament passages teach both the person and the work of Christ. Philippians 2, for example.

It's hard to get more classic than that. Philippians 2 tells us, concerning Christ's saving work, that he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even cross death, even death on a cross. That is the work of Christ, and yet, notice how the passage begins.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And then it says, the transition, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the death of the cross. The person and work of Christ are inseparable in the plan of God and in the revelation of God's plan in history.

It is only because Christ is who he is that he could perform his saving work, and the very purpose of his coming and revealing his identity is for the sake of his mission, his cross, and resurrection. It is the same in every classic passage. In Colossians 1, we read of Christ's great work of reconciliation.

Through him, God was pleased, Colossians 1:20, to reconcile to himself all things. And you, Colossian believers, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, as the passage goes on. But before talking about his work, Paul speaks of the requirements and prerequisites for his work.

He's the image of the invisible God, the firstborn, the highest one, the preeminent one of all creation, the heir. And before it says, God was pleased through him to reconcile all things, it says, for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things. The apostles cannot speak of the work of Christ without speaking of his identity.

And it is the same for Hebrews chapter 1, a third classic passage. Hebrews 1 and 2 speak of the Son, who is the, 1 and 3, then, the radiance of the glory of God. And I've had people say the New Testament never uses the word nature to speak of Christ.

That's wrong. The Son is the radiance of the glory of God, and the exact imprint of his nature is the word hypostasis. It means nature, essential being, essence.

It means nature. So after saying those things about his person, it says he made purification for sins, anticipating the great atonement in chapters 9 and 10 in the book of Hebrews. It is so plain: the person and work of Christ are inseparable.

An orthodox view of the person of Christ is essential to an orthodox understanding of his atonement, and the corollary, a defective understanding of his person necessarily leads to a defective view of his saving work. And that is why the cultists are out knocking on doors or performing other good works to try to save themselves. They end up in a program of autosoterism, working for one's salvation, because they deny Jesus' deity and, therefore, are unable to cast themselves upon him and him alone for salvation.

They must contribute to their salvation, so they think by themselves. This point throws a shadow on the discipline to which I have devoted my life because systematic theology, although it has many strengths, also has many weaknesses. There's an artificiality about systematics.

Oh, the strengths and weaknesses are bound up. How can I possibly, possibly, there's the word, how can I possibly hold together all the truths of the person of Christ, and then all of his saving deeds, and all the biblical pictures? I'm just, my mind would be a jumble. So, we separate out his person, and study his pre-existence, incarnation, his deity, his humanity, his unipersonality, his two states, and so forth.

And with that understanding, then we study his work, what he did, become one of us, live a sinless life, die in our place, rise again, ascend to the Father, sit at his right hand, pour out the Holy Spirit, intercede for us, and he'll come again. All that is his

saving work, and all that is his person. So, systematics theology rightly separates what God has put together for the sake of better understanding the parts.

But it is artificial. If we stay there, it is not good. We must put things back together, lest we tear asunder what the Lord has put together permanently.

That's not right. So systematics is a helpful tool, especially if we follow the proper theological methods, that is, starting with exegesis, going to biblical theology, incorporating historical theology, and then reaching systematics cautiously, carefully, exegetically, and tentatively. The person and work of Christ are inseparable in scripture, and they must be inseparable in our thinking as well.

So, how will that influence our study of the events and the pictures that treat Christ's saving work? We'll always keep an eye open for his person. It is not hard. The passages are filled with both.

But it is a good reminder, as already Saint Anselm told us, that we need to understand who Jesus is to appreciate what he did for us. One important aspect of this. It is a strange thing to think about.

A religion whose centerpiece is the death of its founder. Let me get this straight. The crucifixion of a Jew is what you're all excited about? Yes.

Of course, I'm being too simple in talking like that. But it is true. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ, inseparable from his resurrection, I can't help but say, being a systematician, it's in my blood.

That is the center. What? That is not victory. That is defeat. So, it would seem.

And there is great mystery in the cross. When I'm done talking about it for 20 hours this week, you'll understand it a lot better. But do not be misled.

You will not plumb the depths, and you will not totally understand. Because here's the problem. It is mysterious indeed how the death of the God-man could make atonement for the sins of all the people of God of all ages.

Bring to a screeching halt millions of Old Testament sacrifices. One sacrifice for all time saves whosoever would believe ever. I know that's two evers, but that was for emphasis.

How could it be? The way I say it is, the mystery of the incarnation lends its mystery to the cross. You explain to me the identity of the God-man fully. You explain that fully, and I'll explain the cross fully to you.

You can't do either one. It is a great mystery that God becomes one of us. The baby in the manger is almighty God.

He is the baby in Mary's womb, is the God-embryo. The baby is the God-infant, the God-toddler, the God-little boy, and the next one just rattles my cage, the God-teenager. Lord, help us.

Just trying to be funny there. And I was a teenager once, believe it or not, about 200 years ago or so, my grandchildren say. No, he's the God-man who loved us and gave himself for us.

There is the mystery in the incarnation. The two great mysteries of the Christian faith are how God is three in one and how God became a man. They're both essential.

They're both revealed in the Bible. That's where the true mysteries come from, God's own self-revelation. And yet, we cannot fully understand how he is God and man in one person.

Oh, we confess it, we believe it, we make certain explanations, and we exclude errors. That's what we do. And it's the same with the cross.

We trace the nine events, emphasizing the death and resurrection of Christ. We work with the biblical pictures, the six big ones, and we exclude errors. Much of that we did as we did our historical theology survey.

But in the end, St. Augustine said it well, we understand up to a place, and then we worship. In my own limited understanding, this is evidence of the truth of this religion. No human being made up the doctrine of the Trinity.

It was one of two things the Lord used to bring me to himself as a 21-year-old. The other was the honesty of God, the candor of God, in 1 Corinthians 15, saying, what would obtain if Christ weren't raised from the dead? I said, this is incredible. This is wonderful.

And of course, then the next verse, in verse 20, says, but now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who believe. Anyway, Christology is essential to a doctrine of the atonement. Number one, the person and the work of Christ are inseparable.

Number two, the saving work of Christ must be understood in light of the Trinity. Here we're putting two mysteries together. Uh-oh.

The Trinity and the Incarnation kiss at this point. The doctrine of the Trinity, to be real simple, says there is one God. God has always existed as one God.

We see it in Deuteronomy 6.4. We see it in James chapter 2, 1 Timothy 2.5. There is one God. The second statement in the doctrine of the Trinity is that this one God has eternally existed in three modes of being, in three ways, in three persons as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Not three gods, one God, eternally existing in three persons.

Number three, the third statement is that these three are never to be separated because there is one God. But they must be distinguished. Okay? Number four, which we really won't deal with, is that, well, Scripture treats these three together in unity and equality.

A fifth point would be that they mutually indwell one another, and now we're way beyond our depths in what we need to think about. I want to dwell on this point. The three persons are distinguished but never separated.

The Father did not become incarnate. The Holy Spirit did not become incarnate. Only the Son became incarnate.

You with me? So therefore, the Father didn't die. Actually, that was an early church false teaching called patrapationism. Patrapationism, the Father that some taught the Father died on the cross.

No, the Father didn't die on the cross. And the Holy Spirit couldn't die on the cross because He's a spirit. Only the Son became incarnate.

So only the Son could make atonement and rise again. We distinguish the persons. But here comes the rub.

And here comes the mystery of the Trinity shining on the work of Christ. We distinguish the persons, all right? At Jesus' baptism, Jesus came up out of the water. The Father speaks from heaven.

And here's a visible, a theophany, a visible manifestation of the invisible spirit in the form of a dove. Three persons, one God. Distinguishable but inseparable.

That means that although the work of Christ was only performed by Christ Himself, there is a sense that it's the work of the Trinity. Now, I'm going to point out a couple of biblical passages that teach you that it's the work of the Father and the Spirit. But as a systematic theologian, I will share with you my own understanding of how things work and of systematic method.

If I had no passage, okay, number one I would say, I have no passage, all right? That's an important point to me. Theology must be based upon exegesis. And it can make moves beyond exegesis, but they must be labeled carefully as such moves because

they are more easily corrected or changeable, and they should be regarded like that, as sort of second order, if you will, than the teaching actually based upon the very words of Scripture themselves.

With me? But I do have Scripture. So, if I had no Scripture, I would say, the Bible never says that the Father or the Spirit were involved in the atonement. It only says the Son.

Of course, it only says the Son died. Not only that, but it also doesn't say they were involved. But since the persons of the Trinity are inseparable, they were involved.

And there's a sense that the work of atonement was the work of the Trinity, okay? But let me show you that, indeed, the work of Christ is the work of the Trinity. The work of Christ is the work of God the Father. Now, don't misunderstand me.

I'm not confusing the persons. I'm not putting the Father on the cross. The one on the cross was the Son.

And the work on the cross was the Son's work. But it's also the Father's work. 2 Corinthians 5:18 and 19.

All this is from God, who, through Christ, reconciled us to God and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Only Jesus made reconciliation on the cross.

Only he is called Ephesians 2, the peacemaker who dies to reconcile God to us, and by a reflex action, us to God, okay? But his reconciling work is also the Father's work. We are not putting the Father on the cross. We're simply saying the persons of the Trinity; since there is one God, these persons are inseparable.

Christ's unique work of reconciliation also consists of this: God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. Not only that, but Hebrews 9:13, 14 brings a spirit into this atoning work. And the spirit never became incarnate.

The spirit cannot die. And the work of Christ is the work of Christ. But here's how the writer to the Hebrews puts it.

Hebrews 9:13 and 14. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, not of the Father or the Spirit, they don't have blood, all right? Will the blood of Christ, the violent death of Christ, how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, how much more will his blood purify our conscience from dead works to serve

the living God? Christ alone was a priest and sacrifice, and he offered himself to God; he offered himself without blemish to God through the eternal spirit. I know at least one great commentator, Philip Edgecombe Hughes, who would translate small s spirit referring to Christ's divine nature.

I do not agree with it. I agree with William Lane, my favorite commentator on Hebrews, and almost everybody else, that it should be capital S. So I'm acknowledging different exegesis there, but the meaning is Christ offered himself up to God. Christ alone died, but it was through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is involved in Christ's atonement. It's the only verse I know of in the Bible that says it like that. That is, the work of Christ is the work of Christ.

But it's also because the persons are inseparable, the work of the Father. And it is through the spirit that Christ offered himself up to God, and so William Lane, in his Hebrews commentary, says that means this sacrifice is absolute. It is the end of all sacrifices.

It actually gives its efficacy to sacrifices made hundreds of years before this sacrifice. It is absolute. It was made by the God-man at the Father's will through God, the Holy Spirit.

Thus, it becomes the work, in a sense, of the Trinity. I think we should wrap up. After a little break, we'll come, we'll deal, and in the next hour, we'll start with the two states' doctrine and then move to the three offices of Christ.

This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christ's saving work. This is session 5, Introduction, Part 5, History of Doctrine and Christology.