

Christ: Systematic Summary of Christology, VI

Let us continue our study of Hebrews 1 as a foundation for Christology. In verse 3 we saw two different ways that the writer to the Hebrews affirmed that the Son of God is of the very nature of God. In the middle of verse 3 it teaches that He is the priest. “After He had provided purification for sins,”—He did something that no Old Testament high priest did—“He sat down”—and notice where—“at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven,” a reference to God Himself. He is the great and final high priest. He made purification for sins. His sitting down at God’s right hand indicates the sufficiency and the perfection of His priestly work and His sacrifice. “So He became as much superior to the angels as the name He has inherited is superior to theirs.” In this case, it is the name, Son, which is a divine title. It does not mean for the first time He received the name Son at His resurrection, ascension, and session, as we call it, sitting at God’s right hand, but that this was a great and public proclamation of His sonship. His sitting down at God’s right hand thus indicates the completion of His priestly work in terms of offering up sacrifice. It also speaks of His coronation as king because He sits down in the place of dignity and authority at God’s right hand. The contrast is then pursued between the angels and the Son. The angels worship Him, seen in verse 6, the angels of God are servants, shown in verse 7, but about the Son He says, “Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever.” The Father addresses the Son and calls Him God in verse 8. Notice He has a throne, scepter, and kingdom in verse 8. He is not only the prophet (verses 1 and 2), not only the priest (verse 3), but He is the king. He is prophet, priest, and king. The three Old Testament offices thus coalesce in the Son of God who has all three offices. That is enough for me to work with the notes on the deity of Christ and to be able to refer to this passage so you will understand what I am doing.

Christ has the nature of God. We see it here in Hebrews 1:3 where it says He is “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being,” of His essence. So He is of the nature of God. Furthermore, He has the titles of God. Our claim is not that these titles always and only speak of God. Lord or master is used of human masters with slaves in places like Ephesians 6:5 and following. Even “God” could be used of other beings beside deity. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 “the god of this world,” which is a reference to the devil, “has blinded the minds of unbelievers.” So our claim is not that these titles speak of God every time they are used in the Bible, but rather our claim is that in these contexts they do speak of God when they are used of the Son of God. He is called Lord. We have already seen in Philippians 2:9-11 that God has exalted his Son so that “every knee would bow [...] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” This is plainly a reference to deity. It is the universal acknowledgment of His lordship that He deserved before creation. He did not claim that right which was His, but instead He will get that recognition in the eschaton, when every knee will bow before Him and confess His lordship.

He is the Son of man, and if you look in Matthew 26 when Jesus uses the title, the high priest understands and rips his clothes because it is used in a divine sense. We have seen the title God ascribed to the Son in those places in John’s Gospel: “the Word was God.” Thomas said, “My Lord and my God” when he spoke to Christ in chapter 20. Hebrews 1:7-8 says it this way: in speaking of the angels God says, “He makes His angels winds, His servants flames of fire. But about the Son He says, “Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever.” In Hebrews 1:8 the Father addresses the Son as God. The title “Son of God” is a divine title in Hebrews. Likewise, in John 5:18 the Jews were seeking to stone Jesus. In John 5 it says, “They were seeking all the harder to kill him” not only because He was breaking the Sabbath, in their estimation, but He was also calling God His own Father, thereby making Himself equal with God. The Jews would have called God their Father, but they objected to Jesus’ use of the term Father because He called God His Father in such a way as to make Himself equal with God. Jesus said in John 5:17: “My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working.” Jesus puts His

healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda on a par with the working of God. Not in the mere sense of somebody doing God's will, but in the sense of the direct working of God. They understood the message. Where is the reference to Son of God? When He calls God His Father, He is, of course, calling Himself the Son. John 5:18 says, "He was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God." In many places titles that pertain properly to God Himself are used of Christ. The Scripture is not being improper, rather it is ascribing deity to the Son by virtue of these titles.

The Son has attributes that only God possesses. According to John 1:14 and 17, the Son is "Full of grace and truth" and in seeing the Word become flesh John speaks for the other apostles when he says we beheld His glory. This could be said of no angel or mere human being. The law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. You cannot put an angel's name or an apostle's name in that slot. It would be absurd. He has the qualities of God. He has got the quality of eternity. We saw in Colossians 1:17 that "He is before all things." That could only be said of one who is God.

Immutability is expounded upon in Hebrews 1:11-12. In contrast to the heavens and the earth spoken of in verse 10, verse 11 says, "They will perish, but You remain." Here he uses the image of a set of clothes getting old and needing to be discarded. "They will perish but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But You remain the same, and Your years will never end." The present heavens and earth will be replaced by the new heavens and new earth; but in contrast to the transient physical creation, You remain the same, "Your years will never end." The Son is immutable; He does not change in His essential characteristics. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever," to use the language of Hebrews 13:8. We could add to this other attributes in the Scriptures. For example, we could add power. In Philippians 3:20-21, it says, "Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body." Whose power is it that will change our mortal bodies so as to cause them to be immortal? It is the power of God that will do that. Only the power of God is going to raise the dead and change our bodies. That power of God is ascribed to Christ in Philippians 3:20-21. Thus, I am not claiming that this list of attributes is comprehensive; it is illustrative of even more proof texts. Perhaps you will find more as you continue to study the Bible and fill out the list.

He is of the very nature of God. Divine titles are ascribed to Him as well as divine qualities. He does the works that only God performs. There are certain works in Scripture only done by God Himself. Jesus performed these works—it is a syllogism—therefore, Jesus is God. What works do I have in mind? Creation, providence, redemption, and consummation—the big four. The work of creation is spoken of in John: "Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made." Colossians 1 says, "By Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, [...] all things were created by Him." It is very plain that these writers ascribed to Him the work of creation. He is the Father's agent. Hebrews 1:2 says, "Through whom"—the Son—"He"—God the Father—"made the universe." Are you prepared to put an angel's name in there or a mere man's name? That is blasphemous and ridiculous. The Son does the work of creation. He is God, equal to and distinct from the Father. You may be troubled by the "by" and the "through." Is there not a subordination of the Son implied in these verses? Yes, the Bible teaches a subordination of the Son to the Father, so we need to acknowledge this subordination. The Bible itself teaches this so we affirm it. I have got much stronger examples than these. There is biblical warrant for subordinationism, which means the Son is underneath the Father in some sense or senses. These need to be carefully defined from the Bible. In John 14:28, Jesus says, "The Father is greater than I." That does not prove Jesus is not God. We need to see in what sense the Son is subordinate to the Father. "The Father is greater than I." My point here is only to say there is a subordination taught in the Bible. "He has given to the Son,"—Jesus says of the Father—"to

have life in Himself.” It could not be said of the Son doing that for the Father; it does not work. It is the Son as the incarnate Son, of course. Likewise, “The Father is greater than I” in John 14 is in the same sense. I was directed toward subordinationism by the creation passages, which present an order to the Trinity: the Father in first place, the Son, whom we call the second person of the Trinity, and Holy Spirit. In the work of creation we can acknowledge subordination. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned very much, but in Genesis 1 He is hovering over the waters as a chicken hovers over her chicks. So we could say the Spirit is subservient to the Father as well. There is a biblical warrant for the concept of subordination, but we need to make an important distinction between essential subordination and economic subordination. Essential subordination means subordination of essence. Is there a subordination of essence of being of the Son to the Father? Do these texts teach that? I have to be an honest man and say that possibly these texts are compatible with such an affirmation. We are honest. Should they be taken that way? No. Why? To make your model, whether in science or theology, you have to take into account all the data—all the information. These two texts, and in fact all the humanity texts, could fit that grid, but all the deity of Christ texts could not and there are many of those. Essential subordination thus must be rejected as not taking into account all the biblical data. This is incompatible with an affirmation of Christ’s deity. What is the problem? You are running afoul of scores of passages. To hold essential subordination you have to reinterpret John 1, Hebrews 1, Philippians 2, Colossians 1, and Revelation 1. I might add John 5, 8, 10 and 12, which all teach Jesus’ deity; and in chapter 20 it is incredible.

The Scriptures teach economic subordination. Functional/economic has to do with work—not a subordination of essence, but a subordination of work. You are equal essentially, in terms of essence, to every other person in your local church, but God has willed that there be order in the church and we all are subordinate to the officers, to the elders of the church. There is an essential quality thus, which is perfectly compatible with an economic subordination of the members of a church to the officers of a church. Economic subordination is subordination of function, work, and rule. In order for the church to function correctly, God has set up officers. He is saying that the church ought to have order; it needs leaders and it needs followers. The followers are in subordination to the leaders. There are all kinds of biblical teachings about the way leaders are to lead, but we are familiar with economic subordination. It is the same way in the role relationships of husband and wife in marriage. There is an essential equality, but I believe the male is called to headship. If it were the loving male headship that the Bible teaches, this would have a much better reputation than it does. Suffice it to say that economic subordination—subordination in terms of function, work or role—in home and church is compatible with essential equality of men and women, husband and wives, and every church member to the leaders of the church. This economic subordination, which is what I am affirming, is compatible with an affirmation of Christ’s deity.

So we can account for all of the data. The subordinationist texts speak of Jesus’ Incarnation, His humanity, and His economic submission to God and His will. The deity of Christ texts speak of His essential equality to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus does the works of God: creation, and now secondly, providence. Colossians 1:17 says, “In Him all things hold together.” By Him all things consist. During the break people said, “How in the world can somebody not believe in the deity of Christ?” I said, “If you do not believe in the Scriptures you can do it.” “But assuming you have a high view of the Bible, how can you not believe in the deity of Christ?” It is a good question. It involves brainwashing of the cults. It involves all kinds of things. It involves a mentality whereby people are indoctrinated and told what to believe and they are made to feel guilty if they do not believe it. But work with these passages, stay in the context, and just ask the people, “Could that be said of an angel? Could that be said of a mere human being? What other options are there? What

is your view of Christ; who is He? He holds all things together?” Hebrews 1:3 says, “Sustaining all things by His powerful word.” That is not possible of an angel. Is a human being capable of sustaining all things by his powerful word? That is impossible. The Lord Jesus does the work of providence. Look at how emphatic the Bible is. He is the creator; He is the sustainer; He is the redeemer. That is the biggest proof. How many times does it say He died and rose again to save us? How many times does it say, as McGrath says in the book, *Understanding Jesus*, “We believe in Christ to be saved?” It says this many times. Woe unto you if you believe in an angel or human to be saved. The Bible contradicts it in Colossians 1. “You are not baptized in the name of Paul,” he says, “but you are baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” The work of redemption, whether giving people the authority to become children of God, John 1, reconciling people to God, Colossians 1, or here in Hebrews 1, providing purification for sins, is the work of God. Here is the biggest proof of all. Five times Athanasius was exiled from his home in Alexandria because he would not be moved concerning who Jesus was. He used the soteriological argument, the argument from salvation, for the deity of Christ. If Christ were not God, He could not save us from our sins. He said positively the Son of God has to be God to make us sons of God. It does not work out any other way. Tamper with His deity, Athanasius taught, and we are not saved. You jeopardize salvation. Dear friends, you could say to your friendly neighborhood cultists, your neighbor, or your fellow worker, “We have to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. Here are the hundred verses that I have found that say that.” That assumes He is God because only God can save us. We cannot entrust our salvation to a mere human being. It is folly. He could not even say it to himself or to an angel. Angels do not save anybody. They are God’s servants, sent out to minister to those who will inherit salvation. In Hebrews 1:14, as far as salvation is concerned, angels are outsiders; they are spectators, from 1 Peter 1, trying to figure out what is going on because they do not experience redemption themselves. They are certainly not the redeemer. The Son of God does the works of God: creation, providence, redemption, and—the big one—consummation as well. God could not have said it more fully. He creates, He sustains, He redeems, and He wraps it all up in the end. There is even subordination there; we do not deny it. There is subordination all the way through. The Father did not die on the cross and rise again, rather the Son did. But the Son is God to do that work. In the end, according to 1 Corinthians 15, the Son will turn over everything to the Father. There is subordination. But it is a subordination of work, of role. His work of mediation will in that day be perfectly consummated and God will be all in all.

Colossians 1:16 says, “All things were created by Him and for Him,” for His glory and His purposes, He is the consummator. Hebrews 1:2 says it so plainly: “God has appointed Him heir of all things.” The Son is the beginning, the middle, and the end, Amen. I suppose it is the fact that He does the works of God that is the most emphatic proof of His deity. Just redemption itself is spoken of hundreds of times. In the Gospel of John, faith is mentioned 99 times, about 90 of which are references to genuine, or saving faith, in which Jesus is the object. Jesus receives the worship due the true and living God alone. The angels worshipped Him—I am no longer positive whether verse 6 refers to His birth or His ascension. In his wonderful two-volume commentary on Hebrews, William Lane puts an obstacle into my understanding here, and that is okay; I would rather be unsure than sure and wrong. “When God brings His firstborn into the world,” verse 6, “He says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship Him.’” It may refer to when He brings Him into the world at the Incarnation, a reference to Bethlehem. But maybe as Lane points out, because of that same use of the word, “world,” in Hebrews 2:5 and the context here, which strongly favors that it is Christ’s ascension and going into the heavenly world and sitting down at God’s right hand, it is not. In either case, at His birth or at His ascension, the angels worshipped Him. That is my point. The angels relate to Him as creatures relate to God. The angels worshipped the Son of God. The blind man worshipped Him. I think we often read the Gospels ahistorically. We read them from the perspective of our worshipping the Trinity on Sunday morning. When we see people in the Gospels coming and prostrating themselves before Jesus and asking Him to heal their child or their servant, we say, “They

are worshipping the second person of the Trinity.” I do not think so, for the most part. For them to think that this was God would be an incredible thing. They could not even understand. The disciples did not understand until after Jesus’ resurrection. They were desperate people and here was a miracle worker. They were going to make themselves look foolish; they were going to humble themselves without problem and bow before Him saying, “Please have mercy on my child.” Do they think, “He is God” and I should worship Him? I do not think many did. But in John 9, I do think that is the case. In contrast to the hardness of heart of the Jewish leaders, the former blind man is absolutely gullible. As a friend said to me once, “I am glad that the evangelical Christians got to my door before the cultists because I probably would have bought it.” John 9:35-38 says, “Jesus heard that they had thrown him out.”—so He seeks him out just like in the Garden of Eden; God sought out our first parents after the Fall—“And when He found him, He said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ ‘Who is He, sir?’ the man asked. ‘Tell me so that I may believe in Him.’” This guy is like a piece of fruit ready to be plucked off the tree. It is incredible. Point me in the right direction and I will believe. The Pharisees will not believe no matter what Jesus does. This guy says, “Show me what I should believe and I will sign up.” “Jesus said, ‘You have now seen Him; in fact, He is the one speaking with you.’ Then the man said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped Him.” I think this approaches Christian worship. How ironic that the high and mighty do not worship, but an uneducated blind beggar, no longer blind, worships the Son of God. We can liken this to Thomas’ declaration: “My Lord and my God.”

Systematicians like order; we cannot stand disorder. My students always make fun of the way I line up my books. All I can say is, compared to the man who taught me systematic theology, I am sloppy up here. Anyway, you know Philippians 2:10-11, the section on the two states of Christ: “Every knee will bow [...] and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God.” We need a bigger category because the unsaved are not worshipping, but they are acknowledging. The saved are certainly worshipping. Now I want to put this in a certain biblical context. Christ receives worship. It is undeniable. Biblically, good men and angels do not receive worship, rather they refuse it. Let me show you. On Paul’s first missionary journey, recorded in Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas were serving the Lord in Lystra when God, through Paul, healed a lame man. There was no period of physical therapy; immediately the guy started jumping around. Paul and Barnabas could communicate with the people in Greek, but when people get excited about God, they speak their own language. Over the years I have had many Korean students who understand, write, and speak English, but if they are in a prayer group, they will pray in Korean if they can, with other Korean students. You use your mother tongue in worship and prayer often times. These people began to shout in the Lycaonian language. Paul and Barnabas do not know this language, but they do pick up the body language when the priest of Zeus brings out these bulls and wreaths involved in worship and he is to offer sacrifices to the apostles. Paul and Barnabas understand in verse 14, and in the Jewish fashion of indicating revulsion, they rip their garments. This is utterly offensive to them. What happens when you are invited to a worship service and you are the god? This is trouble, definitely trouble. What do you do? You rip your clothes and you howl. This is terrible, absolutely terrible. In verse 15 it says, “Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth [...] and gives you rain from heaven; He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy”—in His providence. By the way, because Paul was the big preacher and Barnabas was the older guy, they called Paul Hermes, the messenger god, and Barnabas was called Zeus. The apostles wanted no part of this. Here is my point: good men reject worship. Twice in the book of Revelation the apostle John is overcome by the visions he is receiving of the end of the world. The man is like a dishrag that has been wrung out. He is emotionally spent. These things are too much for a mere human being. He collapses. I do not even know if his intention was to worship. The angel messenger from God in chapter 1 sets up this business: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him [...] by sending His angel to His servant John who testifies to everything he saw”—the Holy Spirit

is in there too, so there is this big chain of revelation. The angel immediately is giving these things to John. John collapses at the angel's feet in Revelation 19:10 and 22:8. Revelation 22:8 says, "I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, 'Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!'" Good angels refuse worship. Is anybody prepared to say Jesus Christ is a demon? That is so blasphemous. Is anybody prepared to say that He is a bad man or a bad angel? That would be incredible, just absolutely unbelievable. I rest my case on the grounds that good men and angels reject worship. The Son of God receives worship; therefore, the Son of God is God.

Do you agree with me that the five historical proofs of the deity of Christ are powerful together? By themselves they are sufficient, but together they are overwhelming. Patiently teach the truth of God's Word. God is stronger than the strong man. He can bind him and set captives free. He alone who called the light out of darkness according to 2 Corinthians 4 can shine with His light into sinners' hearts and give them the light of God's Word. Let us share the Gospel and patiently and lovingly teach people truth.

I have got a problematic matter that will blow your minds if past history teaches me anything: the so-called extra-calvinisticum. I cannot skip it or you will go crazy. So I will go ahead and share it with you and then you can go crazy because it defies our understanding. This bumps up against things we cannot fully comprehend, but let me just share with you. Extra-calvinisticum is Latin. "Extra" means outside or without, as in extraordinary, and "calvinisticum" is the Latin for Calvinistic. So the expression translated is the Calvinistic extra; it is the Calvinistic outside or without. It asserts that almighty God became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. Since it was God and not a reduced divinity who became a man, the Word, the eternal Word, retained His omnipresence even after the Incarnation. The Word became fully incarnate mysteriously, and since He is the Word and He cannot cease filling all space, the Word also remained outside, extra. You may be thinking, "He became fully incarnate and remained fully outside? I can hardly fathom this." Let me keep going. There was no emptying. Immediately, it seems to students as if the reality of the Incarnation is being jeopardized. Has fifty percent of God become man, and not the other fifty percent? That is not what it is saying. One hundred percent became incarnate, but because He is God, He also continues to fill space. He is inside and outside. It will make sense to some of you immediately, but others will really scratch their heads. I will admit that we are pushing the limits here, but notice that it is not attempting to deny the Incarnation; it is exactly an attempt to affirm it on Calvin's part. Calvin personally taught it, Athanasius already taught it in the early church, and a guy named E. David Willis wrote a big book on the extra-Calvinisticum and the function of this in Calvin's thought. Willis wants to call it the extra-Patristicum, the Patristic extra, because the early fathers taught it, Athanasius for example, or the extra-Catholicum, the Catholic extra—Catholic in the sense of universally taught, frequently taught in the early church. There was no emptying of any divine attributes, thus the Word retained His omnipresence outside of the Incarnation. Calvin said that if the Word had relinquished even one attribute, then it would not be God who became a man, but it would be a demi-god, a reduced divinity. Now you have to qualify. Affirming the extra-Calvinisticum does not intend to make the Incarnation less than real or complete, but just the opposite. It does not say that part of God became a man. It wants to guard the Incarnation, or at least respect the purpose of it, by teaching that God with all of His qualities became a man. Before you dismiss this as just empty speculation, you must ask this: according to Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1, the Word does the work of providence. Did the Word cease performing those functions for 33 years? Is that what you want to say? Did the Father and Holy Spirit carry it on by themselves? Did the Son of God stop holding the worlds together? You say, "I do not want to say that. Certainly He did not perform them in union with Jesus' human nature; the incarnate Son was in one place at one time." In the body Jesus was not in Galilee and Judea at the same time,

friends, it does not work. So this teaches He has omnipresence but, in the flesh, He does not exercise it outside of the Father's will. He only does the Father's will in the flesh, but I am saying that He not only has it, but He exercises it outside of the flesh. Either one must say that He relinquished these functions or that He did them extra the flesh.

I will admit it is a hard one to fathom, but my instincts want me to affirm it with Athanasius and Calvin. It is hard to understand, and at the end of the day I have to qualify it so much that I wonder if it was worth talking about it in the beginning. I think it can do this: it reveals to us maybe our ignorance because we can start to think, "Oh this is easy; five proofs are no problem," but when we start to think through what we mean when we say, "God became a man," it is mind boggling and we realize the limits to our understanding; that is a healthy thing. It humbles us.

Is it wrong to say He gave up His rights or abilities in His Incarnation? Let us be specific; we are talking about His powers, His divine attributes. In my estimation, it is wrong to say that He gave up the possession of those qualities. I am going to argue that He has all His attributes, and it is important to affirm that. That is, essentially He is God in the Incarnation as well, but that He only uses those attributes in obedience to the Father's will. So for example, does He, as the God-man, possess the attribute of omniscience, of knowing all things? My answer is yes, otherwise He is not fully God. Does He always exercise the attribute of omniscience? No, He learns, and furthermore, He does not know while He is on earth the time of His return. I want to affirm that statement of His ignorance. Is that jeopardizing His deity? No. He is fully God, but He only uses His powers according to the Father's will. The temptation in the wilderness was an attempt by the evil one exactly to get Him to use the powers that He possessed outside of God's plan and will. He would not do it. Again, I do not want us to pretend that we understand fully this mystery. Three great mysteries of the Christian faith are the Trinity, divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and the two natures and the person of Christ. We can understand to a certain point. We can then distance ourselves from heresies, but we cannot wrap this around our little finger.

What was it like in His own psychology for Him to be God and man in one person? I have no idea, but He was God and man in one person. We can say I guess what was said of the Trinity with regard to this. Try to deny it and you will lose your soul. Try to understand it and you will lose your mind.

Would I affirm that Christ now knows the time of His return? Absolutely. And everything else too. That is, I would limit His ignorance, and I use that word very reverently and carefully: His not knowing certain things in submission to the Father's will, to His state of humiliation only. He knew all things before, He knows all things now, and also, if I am affirming the extra-Calvinisticum, outside of the Incarnation, He knows all things actively as well (although I admit that just astounds our minds). So I do not mislead and thank you for the qualification. He is no longer weak, ignorant, needy, or susceptible to dying on the cross again. No way. He is the powerful, glorious Son of God.

Revelation 1 gives a pictorial presentation of what He is like now, and it just astounds John—seeing Him in His glory. We have to be changed to be able to look at Him, to be able to enjoy His presence for all eternity.

How do we handle the death of Christ and explain it in terms of some of these things? If the extra-Calvinisticum is true, you just cannot say by itself that God became a human being. In Calvin's *Institutes* this comes up in two places; in one place, Menno Simons wants to teach Christ had heavenly flesh. The dear Mennonites did not follow Menno in this point and it was good because he taught false doctrine. He was a Christian who had a lot of things correct, but not this point. He used a couple of Bible

verses that are capable of this interpretation but should not be taken this way, to teach that Christ had heavenly flesh. He came right from heaven. No, Calvin said in affirming the historic credence of the Christian church, He took His substance from Mary. He was a real human being. And Menno said, you mean to tell me that God could be circumscribed in a virgin's womb? And Calvin said of course not, and then he teaches, God fully became a human being, but God continued to uphold the worlds by the Word of His power. So in that sense He is outside and inside. Concerning Jesus' death, here is my understanding. After thinking about hell and the afterlife for a number of years now, I understand it much better from that perspective. After Jesus said, "It is finished. Father into your hands I commit my spirit." and "Today I will be with you in paradise" to the thief, He died. This meant for Him and everybody else, although He has the additional dimension of deity, the abnormal rending of body and soul. So His body remained on the cross while His human spirit, or soul—His human immaterial part inseparably joined to His divine nature—immediately went into God's presence. The resurrection was thus a getting together again of body and soul and God bringing Him forth in victory, power, and glory.