CHRISTOLOGICAL HERESIES

Issues of Deity and Humanity

"Too Human"	"Too Divine"
Ebionitism: No divine nature, human only	*Docetism*: No human nature, only what seemed to be one.
Arianism: The Word is a creature, less than fully divine.	*Apollinarianism*: Christ is less than fully human, for the logos takes the place of a human spirit.
325 - Nicene Creed; Christ is of the same substance (homoousios) as the Father	381 - Council of Constantinople - "whatever is not assumed is not healed"

Issues of Unity of Person and Duality of Natures

Nestorianism: The human and divine natures are separable.	*Eutychianism/Monophysitism:* Two natures combined into one predominantly divine nature.

Chalcedon: Two Full Natures in One Person

THE 3120/6120 Christian Theology II
Review Sheet for Final Exam
Summer 2010

I. Objective Questions. There will be objective questions covering everything in the class notes from page 77 through page 138.

II. Essay Questions. You will be asked to answer <u>two</u> of the following, one from the first three <u>and</u> one from the last three. You will need to answer all parts of the question as thoroughly as possible.

1. Discuss thoroughly what it means to be saved by grace through faith. Address especially the issues of Lordship salvation and repentance, and how your understanding of these issues affects your practice of evangelism.

2. Compare your understanding of election with that of the professor, discussing particularly the issues of single versus double election and conditional versus unconditional election. Give the strongest arguments for and against each position, examining key biblical texts, and stating your own position. What affirmations can you make about the doctrine of election?

3. Summarize biblical teaching on the terms justification and sanctification, including the issue of perseverance in sanctification. How are justification and sanctification related but still distinct? Note the problems that can develop if justification and sanctification are not rightly related.

4. Discuss the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline epistles. Are there common features of the work of the Spirit in all sections of the Bible, or does each section of Scripture highlight distinctive aspects of the Spirit's ministry?

5. Compare the biblical teaching on the baptism of the Spirit and the filling of the Spirit, commenting especially on Pentecostal views of the baptism of the Spirit. How are baptism and filling related to the Spirit's work of sanctification in our lives?

6. Describe key points of biblical teaching on the gifts of the Spirit, discussing especially the issue of whether or not God gives miraculous gifts today. Mention the differing positions on this issue, and evaluate their arguments, giving your own conclusion.

THE 3120/6120 Christian Theology II
Review Sheet for Midterm Exam
Summer 2010

I. There will be objective questions covering pages 1-76 of the notes (to the end of Unit 2).

II. Essay questions. You will be asked to answer two of the following in as complete an answer as possible.

1. Discuss the following issues concerning Genesis 3: Does it narrate a historical event? Why or why not? What can it teach us about Satan's methods of temptation and how should we respond? What results flowed from the act of Adam and Eve? How should all this impact the ministry of local churches?

2. Why do all human beings without exception sin once they become capable of moral action? Discuss different understandings of original sin, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of each view, including support for the view (or lack of it) in Romans 5.

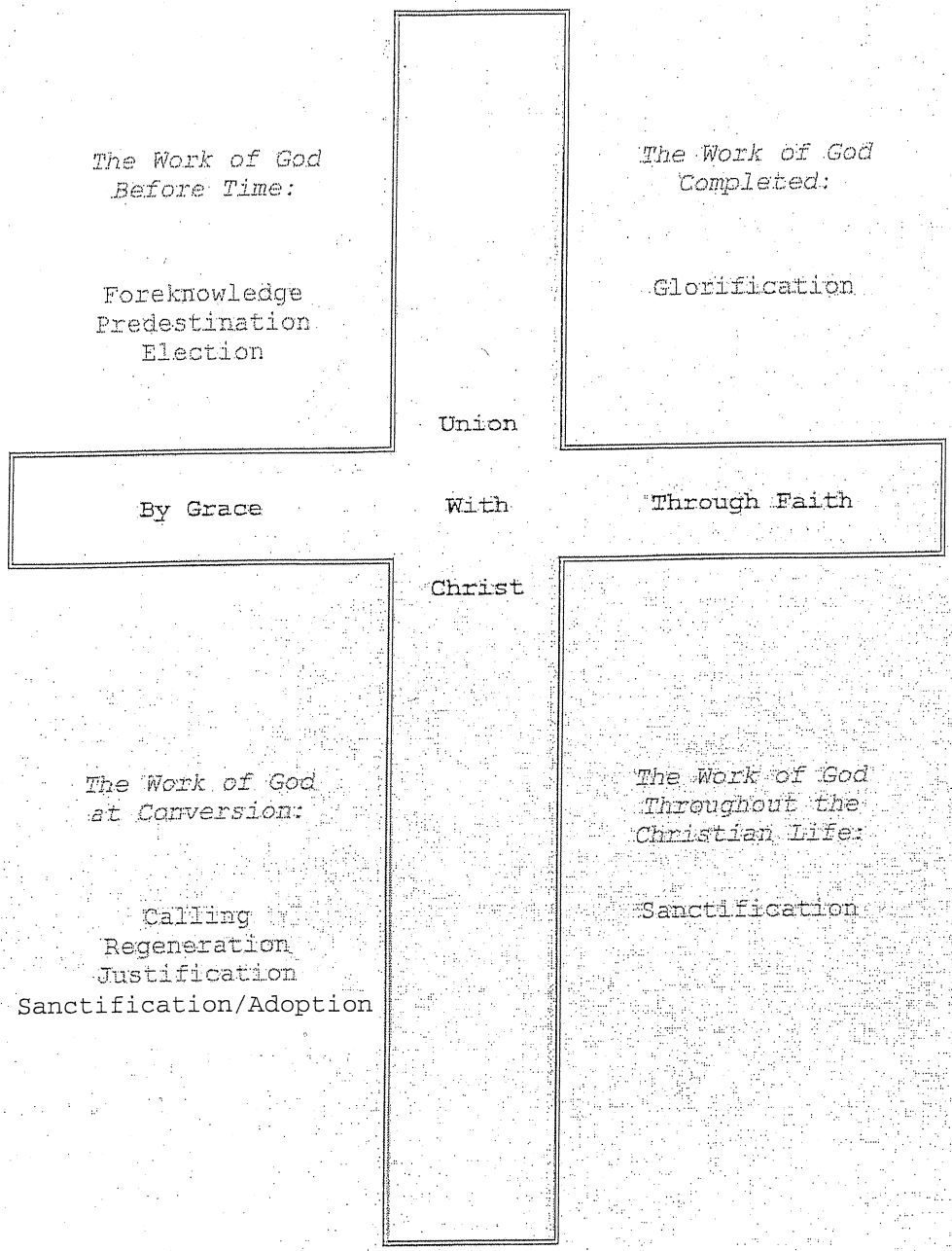
3. Discuss the two distinctive aspects of Christ's birth; that it involved an incarnation, and that Christ was born of a virgin. Include consideration of key texts, associated theological issues, and importance for Christian life and ministry in today's context.

4. Why does the professor suggest "identification" as the best single word summary of Christology? Relate this term to as many aspects of the Christ event as possible.

5. Should the atonement be seen as primarily objective, primarily subjective, primarily classical or some mixture of all three? Give your answer, being careful to explain key terms and to support your answer with biblical evidence. Consider especially contemporary criticism of the penal substitutionary view, including your evaluation of that criticism.

6. Is "satisfaction through substitution" a good summary of the meaning of the atonement? Explain why or why not, drawing on the relevant terms and major theories of the atonement to support your answer.

II. MY MODEL OF SALVATION



THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL (NPP)

The New Perspective on Paul is a significant movement among a small but important group of scholars (E.P. Sanders, James Dunn, and most of all N. T. Wright) claiming that the common understanding of Paul that has been almost universal among evangelicals since the Reformation is wrong on some major points.

The beginning (both chronologically and theologically) lies in the claim that Judaism in Paul's day, and indeed all of Judaism since the rebuilding of the temple in the 6th century BC (2nd temple Judaism) was not a religion of legalistic works-righteousness, but what Sanders has famously termed "covenantal nomism." A Jew kept the law, not in order to become a member of God's covenant people, but out of gratitude for the grace shown in being a part of the covenant people. At most, law keeping was not to *get in* but to *stay in*.

The problem Paul addressed (in Galatians and elsewhere) was not legalism, but ethnocentrism. The so called Judaizers were claiming that anyone wanting to be a member of the covenant people had to do "the works of the law," which NPP interprets as "ethnic identity badges," things like circumcision, dietary restrictions, and Sabbath keeping. Again, they did these things, not to get in, but to show they were part of the covenant people. Paul was arguing that Gentiles were included in the covenant, apart from these "works of the law," on the basis of faith in Christ alone.

The positive contribution of the NPP on this point is a helpful recognition of the historical particularity of Paul's context. The controversy between Jew and Gentile is not identical to the situation of self-help moralists versus humble believers today. Still, I think a fair reading of the Old Testament itself, and Paul's own words in Galatians, show the fallacy of this understanding of Judaism and the works of the law. The issue was "a righteousness derived from the law," seen as keeping the whole law, not just a limited set of ethnic identity markers (see Gal. 3:10, for example). The New Testament does see grace as one of the key differences between Old Testament and New (John 1:17), as a simple comparison of the frequency of the use of the words for grace in Old and New Testament also verifies. God was gracious in the Old Testament, especially in his election of Israel, but the demands of the law were highlighted and judgment for failure to keep the law was frequent.

Even more important has been the redefinition of justification that has come in the wake of this understanding of Paul's context. Here N. T. Wright's work has attracted the most attention. He says, "'Justification' in the first century was not about how someone might establish a relationship with God. It was about God's eschatological definition, both future and present, of who was, in fact, a member of his people" (*What Saint Paul Really Said*, 119). God's righteousness is not something we need and receive by imputation via union with Christ; rather, God's righteousness is his covenant faithfulness. To be justified is to be declared to be a member of the covenant people; to be righteous is to be given the status of being within the covenant.

In taking this position, Wright is seeing justification in Paul as a subset of election, God's act to make a people his own. The dominant motif is that of the covenant; justification does not bring you in, but declares that you are in. But this seems a strained and unnatural understanding

of justification. Yes, it is a declarative word, but not a declaration that one is a member of the covenant, but that one is declared not guilty in the court of God's justice. Such a declaration is problematic, however, for justice seems to demand a guilty verdict. This is where historically imputed righteousness has been seen as central. God can declare guilty sinners not guilty because by virtue of their faith-union with Christ, they do possess a righteousness that merits the verdict of "not guilty."

This traditional view of imputed righteousness as the basis or ground of justification is replaced in Wright by what seems to be a combination of faith and a life showing the reality of faith in terms of a life well lived. Wright does so, based on a view of justification that is strongly eschatological. He describes the Spirit, by which we are empowered to live the Christian life, as "the path by which Paul traces the route from justification by faith in the present to justification, by the complete life lived, in the future" (*Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 148). At other points, Wright does say that all that Christ accomplished is reckoned to believers, by virtue of union with Christ, but Christ's obedience is never seen as the basis for our justification. He also says at points that our obedience is a sign of the reality of the Spirit of Christ living in us. But he at least leaves open the idea that our own imperfect, Spirit enabled obedience is part of the ground or basis of justification. On the one hand, traditional interpreters of Paul have never hesitated to insist that works testify to the reality of faith. But they have never seen them in any way as the basis of justification, because they have seen such an idea as undermining the teaching that justification is by faith alone. Rather, they have said that we are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that remains alone. Such a formulation acknowledges the importance of a changed life, but does not elevate that life to the ground or basis of our acceptance by God; that is what Jesus accomplished for us.

For a short introduction to the NPP by Wright, see N. T. Wright, "New Perspectives on Paul," in *Justification in Perspective: Historical Development and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2006), 243-264, or various articles by him on his website, ntwrightpage.com.

For the most helpful short introduction the NPP as a whole and a guide to the most important literature on the subject, see Simon Gathercole, "What Did Paul Really Mean?" *Christianity Today* (August, 2007): 22-28).

ADDENDUM TO CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY II NOTES
Lecture 1 (I.A. 4.a.)

Sin in Guilt-Based vs. Shame-Based Cultures

Adapted from material in Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 77-103.

I. Introduction.

For decades now, anthropologists have recognized that while people in most cultures experience both guilt and shame, Western cultures tend to emphasize the former, while Eastern cultures emphasize the latter. The difference is that guilt tends to be more internal and individual; that is, guilt is what one experiences upon violation of one's conscience, or when one transgresses what is perceived as a valid moral law or standard. There is an internal sense of moral failure, regardless of whether anyone else knows about it or not. Shame is a corporate or public matter. Shame follows actions that violate external sanctions given by one's community, such that one experiences humiliation and loss of social position or status (loss of face). Thus, in the West, where personal independence and individualism are strong, parents teach children what is right and wrong and seek to have them internalize and personally embrace these values. Shame-based cultures rely more on publicly agreed on norms, group pressure, and what others will think to guide individual choices.

Because Christian theology has developed mainly in Western cultures, guilt has been dominant in our theology of sin, and has also shaped our thinking about the atonement and conversion. Great Commission Christians, however, will want to take a second look and check that our theology is not unconsciously culture-driven but Scripture-driven.

II. Guilt and Shame in Scripture.

A. Both guilt and shame are connected to biblical teaching on sin. Though the word "shame" is not found in Genesis 3, the contrast between "no shame" in Gen. 2:24 and the actions in Gen. 3:7 strongly imply that shame was one of the initial effects of sin. Throughout the Old Testament, terms like shame, scorn, insult, humiliate, reproach, and others appear nearly 300 times; the corresponding New Testament terms appear 45 times. By contrast, words for guilt appear 145 times in the Old Testament and 10 times in the New Testament.

B. Shame plays a strong role in many of Jesus' parables. Luke 14:7-11 contrasts the humiliation of those who take a seat of honor and are then asked to move down with the exaltation of those who humble themselves to serve, and are honored. The parable of the prodigal son combines both guilt and shame, as he is forgiven for the guilt he confesses (Luke 15:18, 21), and released from the shame he had brought upon the family by being restored (vv. 20-24). In fact, the anger of the older brother seems not to be so much that the father has forgiven the son's guilt, as that he had honored one who had brought shame on the family, rather than him (vv. 28-30). In fact, there seems to be an implicit foreshadowing of the cross in that it is the father who bears the penalty of shame. Older men in that culture never ran, yet the father runs

and embraces the shamed son, and in so doing embraced and removed his shame, by bearing it himself.

C. Pauline teaching builds on the idea of shame, but infuses it with new content. God chooses the weak and foolish things to shame what the world regards as strong and wise, so that human pride may be abased (I Cor. 1:27-29). While the world would see the cross as an instrument of shame, Paul sees the enemies of the cross as those "glory is in their shame," because "their mind is on earthly things" (Phil. 3:19). Paul boldly says he is not ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16) and calls Timothy to a similar confidence, even if in this world the gospel brings suffering (II Tim. 1:8).

D. The cross is also strongly related to the issue of shame. Being arrested is normally a humiliating experience, but the gospel accounts show that even in a shameful situation, Jesus never actually lost honor. He was in control, directing the Roman soldiers (John 18:8), observing that the arrest took place to fulfill Scripture (Matt. 26:54, 56), even seeing in it the beginning of his glorification (John 12:23-25). The crucifixion was the epitome of shame, as Jesus was stripped naked, publicly beaten, and mocked by soldiers and the crowd. To endure the cross meant, for Jesus, enduring, despising, and overcoming the shame (Heb. 12:2). Yet, all the while, his true honor shone through. From the cross, he forgave his enemies (Luke 23:34), performed the proper duty of a son to his mother (John 19:26-27), and reaffirmed his trust in God (Luke 23:46). Above all, the resurrection publicly reversed the world's verdict of shame, as Jesus is exalted and "crowned with glory and honor" (Heb. 2:9). It is now the powers of evil that are shamed, as Jesus has triumphed over them by the cross (Col. 2:15).

III. Implications of Guilt and Shame for Theology.

A. For the doctrine of sin. There may still be a need to emphasize guilt in connection with our doctrine of sin, because sin makes us guilty before God whether our culture concurs with God's law or not. At the same time, shame is a thoroughly biblical concept, and when placed in the right context, can deepen our understanding of sin. For example, shame-based cultures can remind us that we are embedded in a collectively sinful race. We do participate in some sense in Adam's sin. Timothy Tennent says, "We are not merely individually or privately guilty before God. We are also corporate participants in a race that has robbed God of the honor due him" (96).

B. For the doctrine of the atonement. This idea of sin as dishonoring God may resonate more clearly in shame-based cultures than many traditional ideas and suggests new emphases in relating the work of the cross. One of the earliest formulators of the doctrine of atonement, Anselm, emphasized the necessity of a God-man to repair the dishonor done to God by human sin. Since the sin was done by humans, the debt should be paid by a human, but since sin had done infinite dishonor to God, only God could pay the debt.

In a shame-based culture, one formidable barrier to acceptance of the gospel is the sense that in so doing, the new convert would shame his family. To counter that, wise preachers of the gospel may help hearers understand that in rejecting the awesome gift of the cross, they are dishonoring and shaming God.

Another aspect of the cross that needs emphasis in a shame-based culture is its public nature. Honor and shame are public concepts and must be lived out in the public arena. On the cross, Jesus publicly bears our shame and disgrace. And, in the resurrection, Jesus is publicly vindicated and honored. This is one reason for the numerous resurrection appearances. He needed to be publicly honored.

C. For the doctrine of salvation. We mentioned above the obstacle potential new converts face in shame-based cultures of bringing shame on their families by their conversion. Recognizing this, many missionaries have focused their work, not on bringing individual converts to Christ, but extended families and larger, social groups. Some fear that group decisions are false and lead to merely nominal conversion, but the New Testament itself witnesses to household conversions (Acts 16:34; 18:8), and in shame-based culture, genuine personal decisions are often made in corporate contexts. Tennent says, "Christian conversion is always personal, but not necessarily individualistic" (99).

D. For the doctrine of the church. The strong group orientation of shame-based cultures demands that churches develop deep relationships. In such cultures, one's very identity is formed by their embeddedness in a group. While group decisions may be desirable, Jesus made it clear that following him cannot be conditioned on the response of others, and that at times following him will mean severing family and group ties (Matt. 10:37-38). When such occasions occur, it will be crucial for churches to become the new primary social group for these people (see Joseph Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*). In fact, in such groups, shame can become a positive force in leading Christians to walk in godliness; they do not want to bring shame on the family.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY II
UNIT 1: THE DOCTRINE OF SIN
OUTLINE

I. Biblical Foundations.
- A. Gen. 3 and the Origin of Sin.
  1. The event of the fall: is it history or a symbol?
  2. The serpent.
  3. The temptation.
  4. The results of the fall.
- B. The Nature of Sin.
  1. Biblical Terms for Sin.
  2. The Essence of Sin.
- C. The Sources of Sin.
- D. The Results of Sin.
  1. Godward.
  2. Outward.
  3. Inward.
- E. Three Specific Questions.
  1. The unpardonable sin.
  2. Gradations of sin.
  3. The knowledge of sin.

II. Historical Illumination.
- A. The Issue of Original Sin.
- B. The Biblical Basis for Original Sin.
- C. Options in the Interpretation of Original Sin.
  1. The Pelagian answer.
  2. The Arminian answer.
  3. The Augustinian answer.
  4. The Calvinist answer.
- D. Results of Original Sin.

III. Theological Formulation of the Doctrine of Sin.
- A. The Absoluteness of Morals.
- B. Human Responsibility.
- C. The Weightiness of Sin.

IV. Practical Applications.
- A. Sin arises from distortions of legitimate needs.
- B. Confession of sin.
- C. Perfectionism and the "carnal Christian."
- D. Brokenness over sin: the sign of awakening.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
UNIT 1: THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

For the last 200 years, sin has become an increasingly problematic doctrine for Christian theology. The Bible is certainly serious about sin, and the 20th century furnished more ample evidence of the reality of sin than any other century, yet biblical teaching about sin and its horrible seriousness is strongly resisted.

One reason is a basic change in how humans have viewed human nature, from seeing humans as basically sinful and depraved to seeing humans as basically good. In America today, 8 out of 9 people believe God loves them (and probably believe he shows good taste sin doing so) What drove Luther in his search for a gracious God was the sense of sinfulness and unworthiness he felt so keenly. But since the Enlightenment that sense of sin has been waning. Today calling someone depraved is more likely regarded as a joke than a serious statement. Yet Jesus routinely called his disciples evil (Matt. 7:11) and regarded only one being as good (Matt. 19:17).

Add to that the more recent deterministic view of humans as the products of their environment, their families, or their psychological drives, and sin becomes impossible, for sin assumes that one is responsible for one's actions. Indeed, as Henri Blocher insightfully notes (in *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle*), when we react to human evil with feelings of indignation, shame, or guilt, we are testifying to the fact that we believe humans are somehow responsible for their evil deeds, but recent developments, especially in genetic research, have sought to dissolve this innate awareness of responsibility.

In a culture where morality is viewed as radically relative, there is no sin, for there is no set standard. Rather, we say, "You may live differently than I do and make decisions I cannot support, but I cannot say that you are sinning. Perhaps it was right for you." At any rate, the supreme duty in interpersonal relationships is to be tolerant. Words like admonish, rebuke, and warn, so prominent in Scripture, are absent from our culture and our lives. To say that something someone else is doing is wrong is viewed as tasteless, rude, and arrogant.

In such a context, affirming the doctrine of sin in a way that is faithful to Scripture and overcomes contemporary objections is a difficult task, but necessary for several reasons.

1. First, our understanding of sin in inextricably linked with our understanding of God, because sin is primarily against God and His law, which is a reflection of His own holy nature. David said in Ps. 51:4 that he had sinned against God, and God only. His sin had certainly touched Bathsheba, her husband, and many others, but it was sin only because it was against God. Without God, there can be illegal acts, but not sinful acts, for God is the standard that measures sin. As Dostoyevsky says in the famous Russian novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, without God, everything is possible. He alone is the standard that makes sin sin.

2. We also must maintain a robust doctrine of sin, because it relates directly to our understanding of salvation. We say, Christ died for my sins. But what exactly does that mean? What is sin and why did Christ have to die for it? The problem with much contemporary

preaching is that we are offering forgiveness to people who do not see or feel a need for it. They feel little guilt and believe that for the most part they are acceptable to God as they are.

How do we preach in a way that produces an awareness of guilt and conviction of sin? Ultimately, it is the work of the Spirit, but the Spirit works through the preaching and teaching of the word. Some probably avoid church services because they think preachers try to make people feel guilty. Some preachers, in seeking to portray the righteous wrath of God, come across simply as angry men who minister condemnation. Perhaps one way to spark awareness of sin in those to whom we minister is to be deeply genuinely aware of sin in our own lives. Paul seemed to do this in calling himself the chief of sinners. If we are broken over the sin in our lives, it will come through in our preaching, teaching and praying, and may be used by God to spark awareness of sin and guilt in the lives of others.

3. Sin is also linked to our understanding of ministry. If the greatest need of humanity is economic, we should focus on social ministries. If the key problem is education and technology, we should plant schools. But if the root problem is the sin problem, nothing but the gospel will help, and sin is the key prerequisite to understanding the gospel.

So we need a clear affirmation and understanding of human sinfulness. As always, we start with the biblical foundations for this doctrine.

I. Biblical Foundations.

A. Gen. 3 and the Origin of Sin. Scripture gives us very little information on the sin of Satan and his angels that led to their dismissal from heaven. More generally, it seems that the ultimate cause of human sin lies in God's choice to make us free creatures capable of communion with God (the free-will defense). The corollary of this freedom is the possibility of misusing it to our eternal detriment. The gift of liberty is also a terrifying weight. We can choose hell, destruction, and separation from God and all that is good. God does allow people to make such choices. The tale of humanity is not a fairy tale, with a happy ending for all. To be a human being is an awesome responsibility, for we have the frightful gift and the weighty responsibility of freedom.

And while we may agree with some who see liberty as the factor that best explains the origin of sin, on the deepest level, there is no finally rational explanation for the origin of sin, for sin is deeply and profoundly inexplicable and irrational. That it should ever come to be is an enigma and mystery.

However, though we cannot fully explain why sin began, we are told how it began among humans. That is recorded in Gen. 3, an important chapter in human history and an important chapter for understanding sin. Several factors in this chapter call for some attention.

1. The event of the fall: is it history or a symbol? Is it something that happened to a real Adam and Eve, or is it something that happens to every person? Though mainline

liberal and most of neo-orthodox theology has argued for a symbolic interpretation, there are three factors that argue strongly for a historic understanding.

a. First, the Bible itself indicates that the fall is a historic event. Genesis 4 clearly connects Adam with the stream of history, and to argue that the Adam of Gen. 4 is a historic individual, but the Adam of Gen. 3 is symbolic is very unlikely exegesis. Moreover, Rom. 5:12 and I Tim. 2:14 treat the fall as a historic occurrence.

b. Second, there is a theological problem if there is no historic fall. Clearly humans today are sinful. They emerge from the womb fully equipped to sin as soon as they are capable of moral action. It does not need to be taught. Yet Scripture affirms that God created humans good. The only way to harmonize these two facts is to say that God created humans originally good, but that there has been a historic fall. Either God created us sinful or there has been a fall. Without Genesis 3 and the fall, the rest of the Bible and all of our experience make no sense.

c. Thirdly, the affirmation of a historic fall has been the overwhelming position of the Church down through its history, until very recently. In affirming the fall, we are holding a classical Christian position. While we do not put the support of history above Scripture, neither should we casually dismiss it. I like to be on the side of history.

So we affirm that Gen. 3 relates the occurrence of a fall that happened at a moment in time. This does not mean that there may not be figurative elements in the narrative. For example, should we be able to locate the Garden of Eden and find the angel guarding the way to the Tree of Life? Some say it was destroyed by the flood, but it is possible that it was in a different dimension, to which we return in Rev. 22. I am not sure.

Derek Kidner suggests that Genesis 3 may be a narrative that describes real, historic events in figurative language. He gives II Sam. 11 and 12 as a parallel. Both describe the sin of David, a real, historic event. But the latter account does so in figurative language. Perhaps better is the way Henri Blocher puts it. He thinks the important question in relation to Gen. 2-3 is not whether it is "a historical account of the fall, but whether or not we may read it as the account of a historical fall" (*Original Sin*, 50).

I believe it is important and necessary to affirm the reality and historic nature of the fall for the reasons given above. I believe it is possible that some of the elements of the account may be figurative, but I do not feel that it is either necessary or useful to affirm that there are figurative aspects. Either way, Gen. 3 is God's inspired account, given to us in the best way to communicate the truth of the fall.

2. The serpent. How can an animal speak, and why would it want to deceive Adam and Eve? Why wasn't Eve surprised when it spoke to her? It is only in the NT that we are told clearly that the serpent was the instrument of Satan (Rev. 12:9), for whom deception is a key characteristic (Rev. 20:3). In some manner, Satan was in the serpent, speaking through him.

Jesus seems to teach that Satan once spoke through a man (Peter in Matt. 16:23), so it is not without some type of parallel, but it is unusual, and the Bible does not tell us how Satan did it.

It is possible that we should also see an indication of Satan's involvement in the prophecy of Gen. 3:15. The enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent is often seen as the struggle between Christ and Satan (see Rom. 16:20), and thus Gen. 3:15 is the first Messianic prophecy (also referred to as the *protoevangelium*).

3. The temptation. There are several interesting points about the temptation. First, some wonder why the serpent approached Eve? Speculation that Eve was weaker is just that, speculation. It is equally possible that Satan attacked the stronger one first, knowing that if she fell, Adam would be easier. I think it is a mistake to try to draw too much from this point, since Scripture simply doesn't say why Eve was the serpent's target. At any rate, v. 6 says Adam was with Eve, and should have been able to warn her. But he said nothing, and readily shared in her sin, offering no resistance. In fact, some say the original sin was not eating of the fruit, but reversing the order of who should have led. While that may be a possibility, the command was not to eat of the tree. Whatever led to their decision to do so, that act was the sin.

Second, and more important, many have noticed the steps in the tempter's approach. First, he tested Eve's knowledge of God's word, and at the same time tried to paint God as unreasonable, and any restriction as outrageous.

There are some problems with Eve's response. The emphasis in Gen. 2:17 is on their freedom to eat from all trees except one. God's restriction was not onerous in the least. Also, to God's command not to eat from the tree, Eve added that they were not even to touch it, and she omitted the emphasis on the certainty of death as the result. Whether this imprecision in Eve's understanding is significant or not, we are not told. Nor is there any hint as to whether her misunderstanding was due to her negligence or to Adam's poor teaching (for the commandment was given to Adam before Eve was created). At any rate, she stayed and debated when she and Adam should have fled.

The next step in the temptation was a direct challenge to the authority and character of God. The serpent said God lied and lied maliciously, to keep them from something good. God is painted as the enemy; Satan as their friend. Satan's challenge does raise a valid question: why did God give them the restriction? Why did he even create such a tree if he did not want them to partake of it?

I think the answer lies in the type of relationship God desired with humans. A relationship of trust and obedience requires that there be something that calls trust into question, something that calls for obedience. Satan was calling for Eve to act autonomously, rather than obediently, to believe the worst of God, rather than to trust His goodness. The presence of temptation was inevitable, given the type of intimate relationship God wanted to establish. It was for our good. And even though we fell with disastrous consequences, God used his marvelous work of redemption to deepen our relationship even more.

We also need to note how much and in what sense there was truth in Satan's claim. Did eating from the tree result in Eve and Adam becoming more like God, knowing good and evil? Gen. 3:22 seems to say so. But I think we must hear the irony in that verse. Yes, Adam and Eve came to know good and evil. In that way they were like God. But the way they possessed that knowledge actually made them less like God. God knows good and evil as a doctor knows disease. Adam and Eve came to know good and evil as a sick person knows disease, and that knowledge does not make one more like the doctor, but less.

As a result of the serpent's words, Eve experienced a threefold temptation: the fruit was "good for food," it was "pleasing to the eye," and it was "desirable for gaining wisdom." Some have seen here a parallel with the threefold temptation mentioned in I John 2:16 or the threefold temptation of Christ in Matt. 4, with the bread being good for food, the kingdoms of the world pleasing to the eye, and jumping from the temple being a similar prideful gesture of autonomy. I'm not sure either one completely fits. The lesson is rather more obvious: sin is appealing in many ways. Don't try to convince yourself otherwise. It's just that there are consequences that are not appealing. The point is to trust God's goodness (Ps. 84:11: no good thing will be denied), and if that doesn't work, remember the consequences.

Eve took and ate, as did Adam. Many centuries later, Jesus said to his disciples, "Take and eat" (Matt. 26:26). But this time, they did so by the command of God. And in so doing, they symbolize the reversal of the fall accomplished by the cross.

4. The results of the fall. There are five:

a. Guilt and shame (v. 7). Some have drawn the implication from this verse that sexuality is somehow inherently sinful and dirty. But Gen. 2:25 says otherwise. I think their desire for physical covering reflects the need they now have to hide physically, spiritually, and emotionally. We can’t take too much openness. We need modesty in clothing and in sharing of ourselves. As the devil had promised, their eyes were opened, but what they saw produced the first negative emotions in the Bible: guilt and shame.

b. Distortions in relationships (vv. 8-19). Stanley Grenz sees sin as essentially the destruction of community, and certainly that aspect is prominent here. The God/human relationship, husband/wife relationship, mother/child relationship, and human/creation relationship are all affected.

From walking with God, his creatures now hide in fear from Him. In place of love and help between husband and wife, there is recrimination and "passing the buck." She will now attempt to overturn God's order for marriage and dominate her husband (see the sense of "desire" in Gen. 4:7); he will become a dictator and oppressor (v. 16). Both man and woman will experience difficulty in their roles. Eve shared a role in dominion over creation, but now she was at enmity with part of that order. From being an occasion of joy, children will also be an occasion of pain. For the man, the environment will no longer be friendly and cooperative. It shared in the degradation caused by sin. Work will become painful toil.

I think these distortions are the central result of the fall. All the others are offshoots. Thus, restoration of those relationships should be central in the life and ministry of God's people today. We need to examine carefully what we are doing to rebuild community in our churches.

c. Knowledge of good and evil (v. 22). As we mentioned above, Adam and Eve did gain this knowledge. But they now knew evil as participants, and that did not make them like God. He had already done that in creating them in His image.

d. Death (vv. 22-24). Gen. 2:17 implies that death will be immediate, that very day. But Adam and Eve lived physically for many more years. That day, they died spiritually. Their capacity for relationship with God died, and thus they were incapable of relating to God without a gracious rebirth of the spirit. Also, their bodies became mortal and subject to eventual physical death. And, apart from salvation, they would eventually encounter eternal death, the second death (Rev. 2:11, 20:14-15).

The fall resulted in death, because it was not God's will that humans live eternally in the state of sin. That is why the way to the tree of life was guarded, and access was denied. God did not intend for us to eat and live forever in our present state. The undeniable effects of aging are God's reminder that we're not home yet, his way of weaning us from the world, and his way of preparing our loved ones to let us go. But in Rev. 22:1-2, the way to the tree is opened for the redeemed, and its leaves cure all the pains and scars of this life. Rev. 22:3 adds that the curse is now removed. Now it is safe and in the will of God to live forever.

The cure for spiritual death is regeneration, the cure for physical death is resurrection, but there is no cure for the second death.

e. The final result of the fall is the effect of the fall on the descendants of Adam and Eve, which we will discuss shortly under the heading of original sin. For now, we turn our attention to the rest of the Bible's teaching on sin, specifically the nature of sin.

B. The Nature of Sin. Virtually every religion has a conception of sin. For the Hindu, sin is ignorance of the fact that this material world is an illusion, and the cure is enlightenment. For the Buddhist, sin is desire. The cure is to train one's soul through meditation to desire nothing. For any number of oriental religions, sin is a violation of harmony with nature. For the Muslim, sin is any lack of external conformity to the law of Allah. What is sin for a Christian?

We could approach the Christian conception of the nature of sin in a number of ways. Some skeptics say that sin is the only empirically verifiable doctrine of Christianity, and we can sadly learn a lot about sin from personal experience. But we will start with our primary source, Scripture. We will look at three of the most prominent words for sin in the Old Testament and New Testament, and try to draw from them some conclusions about the nature of sin.

1. Biblical Terms for Sin. There are a great number of terms for sin in the Bible, and many of them are mentioned by Stan Norman in our test. We will limit ourselves to the

three most important, all of which are mentioned in Ex. 34:6-7, a verse repeated many times in the OT: sin, iniquity, and transgression.

English	**Hebrew**	**Greek**	**Central Idea**
sin	*chata*	*hamartia*	to miss the mark
iniquity	*avon* or *aval*	*adikia*	act and consequence
transgression	*pasha*	*parabasis*	to cross a forbidden line

a. Sin (*chata, hamartia*). These are the most frequent and most general words for sin in the Bible, and the first words used for sin in both testaments (Gen. 4:7, Matt. 1:21). Both mean the same thing: to miss the mark. In the OT, *chata* was used in a secular sense to refer to certain marksmen in the tribe of Benjamin who could "sling a stone at a hair and not miss" (Judges 20:16). But normally, this word was used in a spiritual sense, to refer to missing the mark of God's will, which reflects God's nature, and is embodied in God's law.

We miss the mark for two reasons. At times, we try but miss, because of the power of sin and the weakness of our fallen nature. This is the sense of sin in Matt. 26:41 and Rom. 7:17-18. But, as Charles Ryder Smith notes in his study of sin (*The Bible Doctrine of Sin and of the Ways of God with Sinners*), the great majority of the time we miss God's mark because we are not aiming at that mark. We reject God's goal and purpose and shoot at another goal. The problem with sin is not basically weakness, but perverseness and enmity toward God and His purposes.

Especially is this so with a lost person. Her greatest problem is not that she wants to obey God's law but can't; it is that she cannot obey God's law because she doesn't want to, because she is at enmity with God (Rom. 8:7). For example, in Rom. 3:11, the problem is not that no one finds God, but that no one seeks Him. We miss the mark because we do not aim to hit the mark.

b. Iniquity. The Hebrew and Greek words are not exactly the same here, though all three are often translated "iniquity." The two Hebrew words are essentially two forms of the same word, and refer to something that is twisted and disfigured, something that deviates from the straight and true. *Adikia* is a term from the courtroom. It combines the root for justice or righteousness with a privative prefix. The "a" means this word refers to something that lacks justice.

I have grouped them together because they all include an idea of sin and the consequence or result of sin. As a result of doing twisted, deformed deeds, one becomes a guilty, iniquitous person. For example, the last phrase of Ps. 32:5 translates "the guilt" of my sin, but the word is that normally translated "iniquity." It carries with it an implication of guilt, as a consequence of sin, and leaves us under the righteous judgment of God.

In the NT, someone who commits *adikia* shows that he is not in a right relationship with God, for he lacks righteousness. As a result, he is guilty. Before the divine tribunal his guilt will be announced. Unless there is a supply of justice or righteousness, he will surely be condemned.

Acceptance of the justice of Christ results in liberation from that guilt, and a new standing before God (justification, which shares the same *dik*- root in Greek, as does righteousness).

c. Transgression (*pasha, parabasis*). Though not as frequent as some of the other words, some scholars think *pasha* may be the strongest word for sin in the OT, for it denotes not just crossing beyond a prohibited line, but rebellion and betrayal, and the breaking of a pact. I Kings 12:19 gives an example of the literal use of this word. Is. 1:2 applies it to Israel, who had broken their covenant with God. In this sense, transgression is a violation of trust and the breaking of a relationship. God is described as a covenant-keeping God, whose "steadfast love" (*chesed*) endures forever, but we are a covenant-breaking people.

There are many others we could consider, which add some nuances, but these give us a sufficient background to proceed to our next question. What do all these different ideas of sin have in common? In other words, what is the essence of sin?

2. The Essence of Sin. Millard Erickson, in his widely used theology text, gives a fine definition of sin: "any lack of conformity, active or passive, to the moral law of God. This may be a matter of act, of thought, or of inner disposition or state." This definition thus includes the external act and the internal attitude (see Ex. 20:14 and 17), sins of omission and commission (Matt. 23:23), the motivation behind the acts (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16), and the idea of sin as not simply isolated acts, but a state in which we live (see John 8:34 and Rom. 7:14 for sin as a slave master). Yet, while this is a good definition of sin, it does not really penetrate to the root or essence of sin.

Perhaps the most common suggestion in Christian history has been that sin is basically pride, or hubris. This is based on the first sin of Adam and Eve, seeing it as stemming from a refusal to accept their role as creatures and trying to take God's place, and perhaps as well, on the hint in I Tim. 3:6 that pride was behind the fall of the devil. This has been held by many theologians, from Augustine to Calvin to many today. But I think that, while certainly very important, pride is not at the root of all sin. In fact, some sin, such as denying and not using one's talents and gifts, comes from the very opposite of pride. Stanley Grenz suggests that the tendency toward identifying pride as the root of sin may be due to the fact that mostly men have written theology and pride may be a stronger temptation for men, while sinful self-abnegation may be a greater danger for women, or what Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen calls "social enmeshment." In any case, I do not think pride goes deep enough.

Another suggestion with historical support has been egoism, or selfishness, the positioning of oneself over God. It may be expressed as the preference of one's will to God's, the preference of one's ideas to God's truth. Luther described sin as causing us to curve in upon ourselves. Many sins, especially those of omission, we omit because we are too consumed with self to see the needs of others. Yet this too does not cover all cases. The Muslim suicide bomber who gives his life for the cause of his countrymen may expect a heavenly reward, but it is difficult to see his sinful act as selfish in any ordinary sense of the word.

I think Stanley Grenz gets closer. He starts from the idea of failure inherent in the two most important words for sin (*chata* and *hamartia*). Sin is the failure to live out God's will and

purpose for us, and that will and purpose is to be His image, living in community with God, others, and the created order.

But best of all, in my opinion, is what Millard Erickson and Stan Norman both affirm. The most comprehensive idea of the essence of sin is idolatry, that which occurs when anything is allowed to take the place only God should take. That other thing may be pride or self-pity, selfishness or a cause for which you give yourself. It may be a church or a ministry. But the central fact about sin is that it is against God. The mark we fail to hit is the mark of God's will, which reflects Him. The crookedness we recognize as iniquity is seen as crooked because God is straight, and His ways are straight. The pact we break, the one against whom we rebel is God. Every idea of sin has to lead back to God, and the failure to let God be God in our lives. Even acts that are good in themselves (such as loving one's family) can become sinful if they take God's place. They may be without pride or selfishness, but if they displace God, they are not good in relation to God; they are sin.

We find confirmation for this in both the first of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:3) and the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:36-37). As Augustine said long ago, "Love God and do as you please." For anyone who truly loves God puts God first in her life, and God's will governs her desires. The essence of sin is then idolatry, giving to anything the precedence that belongs only to God. Therefore, repentance and the Christian life must involve a constant recognition and reacceptance of God as God over all areas of one's life.

C. The Sources of Sin. As we said earlier, the ultimate origin of sin seems to lie in mystery. Why Satan chose to sin against God cannot be answered, for there can be no reason for the irrational. Likewise, why unfallen humans should have listened to the tempter is irrational. R. C. Sproul, Sr., says of this question, “Why? I don’t know. Nor have I found anyone yet who does know” (*Chosen By God*, 30).

R. C. Sproul, Jr. asserts that the trail of responsibility for sin “ultimately leads back to God” (*Almighty Over All: Understanding the Sovereignty of God*, 57), but the Bible rejects any suggestion that God is the source of sin, and points rather to human desires (James 1:13-15). Pursuing gratification of these desires in the wrong way or failure to submit them to God's control is what leads to sin. I agree that distortion of legitimate desires is a characteristic mark of sin, and will give a practical illustration of that later. Why we pursue our desires in ungodly ways is a question without an ultimately satisfactory answer, but how sin comes to dominate us does seem to be a question addressed by Scripture. I think Scripture points to an Evil Trinity that lies behind all sin. They are listed in Eph. 2:2-3: the world, the devil, and the sinful nature (or flesh).

1. Satan. In Christian Theology I, we discuss the devil as the being that is behind the deceiving and tempting attacks made upon humanity. Yet he cannot force us to sin. We cannot hide behind the excuse "the devil made me do it."

2. The Sinful Nature. Without that capacity called the sinful nature, or flesh (*sarx*), that came to life when Adam sinned and has been passed down to us, temptation would

find little welcome. Our fallen nature leaves us open and attentive to the voice of temptation. Still, we cannot blame our nature for making us do what we do not want to do, for we consent to what that nature wants, and eagerly seek to gratify it. We approve of it. The heart of the problem is the human heart (Jer. 17:9). We look at this source of sin in our discussion of the human constitution in Christian Theology I. Here we will consider the world as a source of sin.

3. The World. The word "world" (*kosmos*) can mean simply this earth, or the people on this planet. In this sense, God loves the world (John 3:16). But in I John 2:15-17, we are commanded not to love the world. In Eph. 2:2, we are no longer to follow the ways of this world. In Rom. 12:2, we are not to conform to the pattern of the world. In this sense, the world is not neutral, but actively opposed to God and God's purposes (John 15:18-19). There is a power of evil at work among humans that organizes them in patterns that oppose the kingdom of God. It is this organized pattern of humanity in opposition to God that is signified by this use of the word "world."

The organizer behind the world is, of course, Satan, "the ruler of this world" (John 14:30). But there also seem to be other powers involved. They are variously referred to in Scripture as principalities and powers (Rom. 8:38-39), as rulers, authorities, powers, spiritual forces of evil (Eph. 6:12), the basic principles of this world (Col. 2:8), powers and authorities (Col. 2:15), and weak and miserable principles (Gal. 4:9).

The traditional interpretation of these "powers" has been to see them as demons, but that was challenged a generation ago by Hendrikus Berkhof (*Christ and the Powers*), and others have joined him since. He says these powers are distinguished from the angels (and demons) in Scripture, and seem to be more impersonal realities or structures of existence than beings (especially in Gal. 4:9 and Col. 2:8, 20). F. F. Bruce suggests that Paul is referring to “the current climate of opinion,” demonic forces that enslave the mind and heart. These are structures like political systems, economic systems, moral codes, social order. On the one hand they are human structures, yet they seem to have a life of their own. Col. 1:16 says these powers were created by Christ and for Christ, to give order to the world and be a blessing, but they participate in the fallenness of all of life, and have fallen under the control of Satan, and work to advance his purposes (Eph. 6:12). Human culture, for example, is part of the mandate given in Gen. 1:27, but because of the fall, all human culture fulfills the mandate in fallen ways.

Because we live in a world ruled by Satan, and in societies whose structures are shaped by demonic forces, and in corporate groups whose motives are rarely godly, it is very difficult to avoid involvement in what Erickson calls "social sin." This is sin that we do not personally commit, but contribute to indirectly, simply by virtue of being part of societies and cultures and groups that partake of the world and its fallen nature.

What is to be our responsibility, not just in resisting the world's pressure in our individual lives, but overcoming the world, especially the influence of evil ingrained in our societies and in the structures of our existence? What is our responsibility for racism, not in our personal lives, but racism that is ingrained and institutionalized in our society? What is a Christian response in the business world where the profit margin overrules all considerations of the welfare of workers

and consumers? What about the materialism encouraged by every form of mass media? What about the sins committed by our government? Does our affluent lifestyle contribute directly or indirectly to poverty and oppression in other areas of the world? What should we do? Christians have taken a variety of approaches to this problem. What is our responsibility toward the world?

a. Some advocate fleeing from the world (II Cor. 6:16-17). The most famous example historically is the monks, who sought perfection in lives separated from all worldly influences. There are some Christians today who follow the monastic model as far as it is practicable in their lives. They avoid involvement in society, in community affairs, in the political arena, and often, they avoid lost people. They believe in separation from this evil world.

But the attitude of Jesus in John 17:15-18 is quite different. He realizes that we need protection from the evil one, but he doesn't remove us from the world; rather, he prays for our sanctification and then sends us into the world. John Stott has said the church must be "immersed in secularity," and yet radically different to be evangelistically effective. That means sanctification is not found in fleeing the world, but in living fully in the world, but radically not of the world. To the question of Cain in Gen. 4:9, the Bible answers, "yes, we are our brother's keeper." We are part of humanity, part of a society, a culture, a country, and we cannot abandon our social responsibility. If we flee, we lose the possibility for a positive effect.

b. Some have advocated rebellion and with it, violence if necessary. If the structures of society institutionalize sin and oppression, let us destroy them and build a new world. If anyone stands in our way, we will remove them by force. For example, liberation theology advocates violent rebellion.

There are some problems with this approach. For while we may be able to destroy sinful structures, we cannot eradicate the spiritual power behind them by rebellion. Without treating the spiritual heart of the problem, any new structures we build will soon become infected with the same evil and will institutionalize new forms of sin. We must remember that our fight is not with flesh and blood, nor with the visible institutions of society, but with invisible spiritual enemies. This solution does not go deep enough.

Also, the Bible gives little support for the use of force, especially against a legally constituted government. Peter and Paul both command us to obey the government, even an unjust, non-democratic government which allowed them no voice or vote (Rom. 13:1-7, I Pet. 2:13-17). The only exception was in case of a direct conflict between obedience to the state and obedience to Christ (Acts 4:19).

c. Evangelization. The traditional evangelical answer has been evangelization, and there is much value to this. The way to change the world and change society is to change the individuals in that society, and the only way to change people's hearts is through Christ. Only Christ can break the power of the world, and give people new desires and motivations. He has broken the power of Satan and the world, and grants that freedom to believers.

Of course, in this culture, this is not all that we can or should do. For the past twenty years or more, Christians have been recovering the realization that at least in this country, they do have a voice and can make a difference in the political climate. But in our increasing involvement in the culture wars of this country, I fear we are in danger of forgetting that laws are not obeyed and respected unless people think those laws embody and uphold what is right. And it is Christ that can transform a person's view on what is right and wrong.

For example, on the issue of abortion, we can work politically to elect pro-life politicians and get a law passed against abortion, and that will affect the supply. But a far greater need is to change people's hearts and reduce the demand for abortion. Both sides are needed, but just trying to cut off the supply without reducing the demand may result in some good, but may also result in an unenforceable law that would not be respected. Changing people's hearts, loving our enemies, working to win people one by one--these traditional ideas still have a lot of merit and importance. Preaching the gospel may still be the most important social ministry we have!

d. But at least in this country, there is still a lot of room to work for reform (i.e., being salt and light). There is enough of a social conscience, enough of shared values, to enable us to work in our communities and even on larger levels to accomplish some measure of good.

Of course, we cannot and should not use government coercion to try to make people believe what in fact they do not believe. That is both a violation of religious freedom and futile. You cannot make someone believe something. This is the grain of truth in the adage: "You can't legislate morality." You can't change a heart by coercion. But the larger lie in that old adage is the idea that laws can be value neutral; they cannot. The alternative to legislating morality is legislating immorality, which will not work. All laws rest on a moral foundation; we obey them either because we fear punishment or because we think the laws are right. Very few societies can afford a police force large enough to enforce laws that people think are wrong, so laws must embody what people think is right.

This means our first job is persuading others that laws and practices that embody the values we hold dear are good for society as a whole. We must learn to argue our views on grounds that a secular person can understand and accept. We must learn to appeal to shared values where they exist and continue to work by evangelization to create a broader base of those who share our values. We must point out and denounce injustices, awakening the conscience of society. John Stott says, "The church is society's conscience."

We must accept that our results in a pluralistic society will be partial, for the state is not the church and does not share its standard of life. But the state is called by God to provide justice, to reward those who do good and punish those who do evil, and we can help move toward that goal, on local and larger levels. We can have a positive effect.

Above all, the church, as a group separated from the world, has the chance to show by its life an alternative to the world's way. Its actions should reflect the love of Christ toward enemies

and an internal life of beauty, humility, forgiveness and fellowship. It cannot be perfect and need not be perfect to show the world another way of life, made possible by the power of Christ. The failure of the church to be visibly different from the world is one of the major barriers to Christian effectiveness in overcoming social sin.

For further study on this issue, I recommend reading the classic book by Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (and the recent update by D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*). Culture is not equal to what the Bible means by the world, but certainly it is related to it, especially as Niebuhr looks at it. He identifies five different models of how Christians have seen the relationship of Christ to the culture in which they lived. They are: (1) Christ against culture (the monastic model of fleeing a wicked culture); (2) Christ and culture (the medieval unity of church and state or the liberal tendency to reduce Christ to culture); (3) Christ in and over culture (the idea of Thomas Aquinas where culture has an independent sphere, but Christ's influence should be felt in and over it); (4) Christ and culture in paradox (the answer of Luther that sees a Christian as a citizen of two kingdoms living in a tension of the demands of both kingdoms); (5) Christ transforming culture (the answer of John Calvin). While Niebuhr and most of us would probably favor the last, different models are appropriate for different societies and cultures, or even different areas of a society and culture. At any rate, this is one of those books you should try to read sometime in your life.

D. The Results of Sin. We have already looked briefly at the results of the fall, the first sin, and in many ways the results of that sin are paradigmatic, but I want to mention a few other points that speak to the results of sin in general that are not as clear in Gen. 3 as they become later. We will consider the results of sin in three dimensions: Godward, outward, and inward.

1. Godward. We have already spoken of guilt and death, two of the results of sin, in our discussion of the results of the fall. But it is only later in Scripture that we see the full results of sin in making us liable to the wrathful punishment of God, including both possible temporal punishment and, for the unrepentant, certain eternal punishment.

We see temporal punishment as early as Genesis 6, with the flood, and the plagues upon Egypt, the destruction of Israel by Assyria, and the exile of Judah by Babylon are further examples of God punishing sin. And the NT teaches the awful truth of eternal punishment of the lost (see Matt. 25:46--"eternal punishment"; also II Thess. 1:8-9).

Contemporary secular criminal justice theory sees the only valid purposes of punishment as remedial or deterrent, but in the Bible, while those may occasional be a function of punishment, normally God’s punishment is seen as retributive, or demanded by God's just nature. Thus, Scripture sees nothing at all wrong in calling God a God of vengeance (Deut. 32:35, Rom. 12:19). Vengeance is wrong for humans, precisely because it is God's job to maintain justice, and not ours.

Modern culture has problems with retributive justice and punishment in general, perhaps in part because we have a very dim view of sin and a very small view of God. For this very reason, one of the truths we must emphasize in our contemporary formulation is that sin results

in liability to punishment. It may not come immediately, and may be avoided altogether through Christ, but retributive justice is woven into the fabric of the world and we ignore that fact at our peril.

2. Outward. We mentioned already the broken relationships that resulted from the first sin. Not only does sin result in a broken relationship with God, it spills over into every area of human life. Rom. 1:21-32 paints a picture of human devolution. Turning away from God produces not only idolatrous worship (vv. 22-23), but also sexual perversion (vv. 24-27), and a whole cluster of further sins that destroy any possibility of community.

Many people today attach little importance to a relationship with God, but few want to live with no close human relationships. Watch TV shows, listen to music, look at magazines, and relationships are at the forefront. But we seem to have increasing difficulty finding and sustaining meaningful human relationships and friendships. The reason is that sin eats away at our ability to truly love others or give to others. Just as turning away from God leads to a downward spiral that destroys human relationships, so repentance toward God can lead to a mending and strengthening of those relationships. But first, we must be released from the self-centeredness that results from sin and disrupts relationships.

3. Inward. The breaking of relationships caused by sin even extends within. Sin causes us to engage in self-deception (Ps. 36:2), dulls the conscience (I Tim. 4:2) and hardens the heart (Heb. 3:12-13). In fact, every faculty within human nature is weakened by sin. This is the meaning of the much misunderstood phrase "total depravity," or as Anthony Hoekema has more accurately called it, “pervasive depravity” (see *Created in God’s Image*) It does not mean that humans are as bad as they can possibly be; rather, that the effects of sin extend to every aspect of human nature. Its meaning is extensive, rather than intensive.

For example, because of sin the body has become an instrument of wickedness (Rom. 6:12-13), the mind has become darkened (Eph. 4:17-19), the conscience is impure (Titus 1:15), the heart is deceitful (Jer. 17:9), emotions are at war (James 4:1), and the will is enslaved to Satan and sin (John 8:34).

This became important at the time of the Reformation because Catholics believed that only the likeness of God was lost in the fall; the image (including reason and freedom of will) was unaffected. Thus humans are deprived of the original gift of righteousness, but still in possession of certain undamaged powers. The Reformers insisted that reason was darkened and thus we must trust Scripture above reason, and the will is enslaved and thus we must trust grace alone above any human merit. It became an important point of debate between Luther and Erasmus over the freedom or the bondage of the will.

E. Three Specific Questions.

1. The unpardonable sin (Matt. 12:31-32). In my opinion (and there is a general consensus among evangelicals on this point), this sin must be the rejection of the witness of the Holy Spirit about Jesus (John 16:8-11), for apart from acceptance of this testimony, no one can

be saved. It appears that I John 5:16 could refer to this sin as well, but this is a notoriously difficult verse to interpret, with at least a half dozen possible interpretations, so one shouldn't build too much doctrine upon it.

The problem with this interpretation of the unpardonable sin is that many people reject the voice of the Spirit many times before finally accepting the gospel. Have they already committed this sin? I think not. We must understand the rejection of the Spirit's witness to be a persistent one, to the point where one's heart becomes hardened (Heb. 3:7-8), and one is no longer able to hear the voice of the Spirit. Only God knows what that point is, but the ability to receive the witness of the Spirit shows that one has not gone past that point. Thus, this is a sin that a Christian, by definition, cannot commit.

God has the right to judge rejection of the Spirit's testimony at any time, and there are examples of God's judgment in Scripture: God hardened Pharaoh's heart in judgment of his own self-hardening (Ex. 8:15, 32, Ex. 9:12), God abandoned those who denied him (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28), God led those who hated the truth to believe the lie (II Thess. 2:10-12). But because of His compassion and long-suffering, judgment is usually delayed. Only God knows when a sinner has passed the point of no return and is irretrievable. But it behooves all, Christian and non-Christian, to be careful never to sin against conscience, never to harden one's heart. It may be more dangerous than you guess.

One final point on this question: Some folks think that suicide is an unpardonable sin. Suicide is a tragedy, but Scripture states there is only one unpardonable sin. Actually, this idea is a holdover from traditional Catholicism, and the idea that one must confess certain serious sins (mortal sins) or they could never be forgiven. Since suicide cannot be confessed, it is unforgivable. But this is a false idea. When a person accepts Christ, he forgives all sins--past, present, and future. Confession is necessary for unclouded fellowship with God, but the relationship never changes.

2. Gradations of sin. Are all sins created equal, or are there differences? Are some worse than others?

In one sense, all sins are equal. Any sin makes one a sinner (James 2:10), and guilty before God. There is no basis for the Catholic distinction between venial sins, which are small and unimportant and involve only temporal punishment on earth or in purgatory, and mortal sins, which are much more serious and send one to hell unless they are confessed. The error here is in distinguishing between sins in terms of their effect on one's relationship with God. Any sin makes one guilty before God and liable to punishment.

Yet there is a grain of truth in the old Catholic distinction. It is obvious that some sins certainly have more serious effects on other persons than other sins. For instance, though Jesus condemned equally anger at one's brother and murder, I would prefer to be sinned against in the first manner much more than the second. Before God, they may not be different, but in terms of their effects on other people, there are differences.

But Scripture affirms that even before God, some sins receive greater punishment than others. The distinction is that sins committed against greater understanding and more abundant light are more serious. The servant who knows his master's will and disobeys will be punished more severely than that servant who did not know his master's will and disobeys (Luke 12:47-48). With more understanding comes greater responsibility and the possibility of greater punishment. This also fits with the admonition to teachers in James 3:1, and the woes pronounced by Jesus on those cities in which he did the majority of his miracles (Matt. 11:20-24). This last passage seems to imply that these gradations of punishment even extend to hell and eternal punishment. As there are varying rewards in heaven, so there are varying degrees of punishment in hell, for God will judge with perfect justice (see Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, for a famous description of the differing levels of hell, purgatory and heaven).

3. The knowledge of sin. The question here is how we become aware of sin, and the general answer has been through God's law. Paul says that all have access to God's law written on their hearts (Rom. 2:14-15), and thus can know they are law-breakers, and sinners, but Scripture deals mainly with God's people and their knowledge of sin through God's written law.

At the time of the Reformation, Luther and Calvin differed over the functions of the law, which they equated generally with the OT. Both recognized that some aspects of the law, the civil and ceremonial laws, were fulfilled in Christ and thus no longer applicable. Concerning the moral law of the OT, they agreed that by showing God's righteousness and moral requirements, the law "warns, informs, convicts, and lastly condemns, every man of his own unrighteousness" (Calvin, *Institutes*, I, VII, 6). This is the meaning of Rom. 3:20 and 7:7. By convicting us of our sin and need, the law drives us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). Luther especially saw this function of the OT law as central and thus sharply contrasted the Law and the Gospel. Calvin saw a second function of the law in being a deterrent to unbelievers, who restrain their evil deeds out of fear of punishment, but Calvin emphasized in a special way a third function of the law, as a moral guide and exhortation for believers. Thus, among Reformed theology, there has always been an emphasis on the positive use of the law for guiding the Christian life, while those who followed Luther saw the law's function as chiefly to condemn us and thus drive us to Christ.

But knowledge of sin also comes in a deeper and more profound way through the gospel, as Karl Barth has emphasized. The cross, in particular, reveals both the greatness of God's love and the horror of sin. The cross shows what happens when God encounters sin. The Son was made sin for us on the cross (II Cor. 5:21), and the Father judged sin, and the judgment was death. In the light of the cross, we see both the darkness of sin and the depth of God's love.

II. Historical Illumination. Thus far we have omitted consideration of one central passage that could be included as part of the biblical foundations of the doctrine of sin, Rom. 5:12-19. But we have done so because of the enormous importance of that passage for the most controversial aspect of the doctrine of sin in the history of the church, that of original sin.

A. The Issue of Original Sin. We need to be clear on what we are in fact discussing, for our focus is not in fact on what happened in Gen. 3, but what happened to human nature as a result of Genesis 3. Eccles. 7:29 says "God created mankind upright," but clearly we did not

remain so. Why is it that every person, without exception, begins to sin as soon as they are capable of moral action and choice? Why is it that children do not need to be taught to be naughty? If God created us upright, how did we arrive at the state we are in today? Original sin, in terms of its effect on human nature, has been the answer.

B. The Biblical Basis for Original Sin. In addition to the evidence from observation of human nature, there is some biblical testimony to the effects of Adam's sin. There is Genesis 3 itself, with the curses pronounced on humanity. There is the somewhat difficult verse, Ps. 51:5, which is best interpreted as simply affirming that humans are sinful from birth, and has no reference to the sinfulness of sexual intercourse, and there are clear statements of the universality of sin in Rom. 3:23 and elsewhere.

Henri Blocher lists four affirmations Christian theology has historically drawn from Scripture concerning original sin: (1) it is universal, affecting all humans; (2) it is something that has affected our nature (see Eph. 2:3); (3) it is inherited (hereditary transmission is widely held in the history of Christian thought, though the understanding of what is inherited differs), and (4) it is Adamic, in that he plays a special role.

But the key text is Rom. 5:12-19. All discussions of original sin must begin and end with an interpretation of these verses. The text raises several questions; how one answers those questions determines one’s view of original sin. For example:

1. In what sense have "all sinned" in v. 12? Some say this simply means that all choose to commit sins. But if so, why is it connected somehow with Adam (the word "because" in v. 12 is notoriously difficult to translate; Cranfield's commentary on Romans lists 6 options)? If there isn't some connection between Adam's sin and universal human sinfulness, this passage is pointless, and we are still left with the question, "Why do all of us choose to sin?"

2. What is the rationale in v. 14 for the death of those who did not sin by breaking a specific command? What is Paul's point in vv. 13-14?

3. What is the meaning of the persistent comparison between Christ and Adam in these verses? How is it that the actions of one person, in each case, has such far-reaching effects? How far does this comparison lead us? For example, Christ's action has its effect only upon "those who receive God's abundant provision" (v. 17); is there a similar restriction on the effect of Adam's action? If Adam's sin had universal consequences, does Christ's death lead to universal salvation?

4. How can many be made sinners through the disobedience of one man, or be made righteous through the obedience of one man (v. 19)? We should note that "many" and "all" are used almost interchangeably in this passage, and should be understood as synonyms. In Hebrew language and thought, "many" can be used simply for a large, undetermined group (see Is. 53:11 and Mark 10:45 in comparison with I Tim. 2:6), and Paul is heavily influenced by his Hebraic background.

These are some of the issues any interpretation of these verses must address.

C. Options in the Interpretation of Original Sin.

1. The Pelagian answer: Adam was simply a bad example. His sin in no way affects human nature. Our nature today is the same as the nature Adam originally had. We are sinners because we choose to follow his bad example and sin.

This view comes from Pelagius, a fifth century British monk, who was disturbed deeply by the low level of morality in the church and wanted to insist that we can and must live holy lives. He thought the idea that we had inherited a sinful nature encouraged people to acquiesce in sinful behavior as unavoidable. He insisted that free will is able to choose to obey; that humans can, if they so choose, perfectly obey God's commands.

But this view makes nonsense of Rom. 5. The comparison between Adam and Christ has no validity, and leads to the conclusion that Christ is only a good example and we are responsible to save ourselves. This view is exegetically indefensible. It was initially condemned by the Catholic Church during Augustine's lifetime (who strenuously opposed Pelagius), but later slipped back in as the Church adopted a generally semi-Pelagian attitude toward free will, human nature, and salvation.

2. The Arminian answer: Adam's sin means we inherit a corrupt nature. Though we link this answer with the name of James Arminius, it is characteristic of a wide range of theologians, including John Wesley, and is the position adopted by C. E. B. Cranfield in his commentary on Romans. It goes beyond Pelagius in affirming that Adam's sin does have an influence on us. The temptation to sin for Adam had to come from without, for his nature was innocent, or upright (Eccles. 7:29). We feel temptation from within, for our nature is now different, corrupt, with a tendency toward sin. By ourselves, without divine help, we cannot obey God's commands.

This interpretation sees Rom. 5:12 as referring to the sins that each individual commits, which stem from the corrupt nature we inherited. But the verb used in v. 12 is an aorist, which does not normally refer to an ongoing, continual action but a one time past action. This verb is somewhat difficult to reconcile with the Arminian position, though the New Testament authors use the aorist with such flexibility that we probably should not rest too much emphasis on this point.

More significantly is the problem of the death of those who did not sin as did Adam (v. 14) for Arminians. Paul's point in vv. 13-14 seems to be that in the time between Adam and Moses, death spread to all men, not as a result of their individual sins, for they sinned in the absence of a definite, written law, but as a result of Adam's sin. This is a problem for the Arminian view because it maintains that we did not actually sin in Adam, but only inherited a corrupt nature, and, further, that any guilt or liability to punishment we have as a result of Adam's sin is erased by Christ's atoning work on the cross. While it does not save all, it does have a universal effect described in terms of prevenient grace. Prevenient grace, in a sense,

balances the effect of original sin, so that we are not guilty before God for Adam's sin, nor are we unable to respond to the offer of the gospel. Prevenient grace has balanced out original sin.

But if this is so, what is the point of vv. 13-14? Why does Paul even bring it up? The point seems to be that death's reign even over individuals whose sins were "not taken into account" is explained by some degree of liability all humans share for Adam's sin. We all became mortal because of Adam's sin.

This also explains why children too young to commit sins die. Death is the result of sin; they were too young to sin; so somehow their death must be linked to Adam's sin. But this type of a link is what Arminians deny. How can Arminianism explain this? The ususal solution is to separate the physical and spiritual effects of the fall. All partake of physical mortality because of the sin of Adam; spiritual mortality only comes from personal sin.

The idea of prevenient grace, however, does allow Arminians to make sense of the comparison between Adam and Christ. The act of Adam was crucial, for he turned the nature we inherited toward sin. The act of Christ was crucial, for he liberated our nature from the guilt and oppressive weight of that corrupt nature. Both these actions affected all of humanity equally. However, a closer look at the comparison suggests that the impact of the action of the one is in each case much more radical. Adam did not just bequeath a corrupt nature to his descendants; the many were made sinners by his action (v. 19). Christ did not just remove the guilt of original sin, his act "brought justification" (v. 16, 18).

Thus, while Arminianism does answer the question of why all people sin (because of a corrupt nature they inherit), and gives a possible interpretation of some aspects of Rom. 5, it rests heavily on a particular understanding of prevenient grace, which is not clearly taught in Scripture.

3. The Augustinian answer: we sinned in Adam. This view is called by different names: natural headship, seminal identity, realism. It affirms that all of humanity was, in a true way, present with Adam in the garden, and participated in the original sin. Either all of human nature was in Adam, and we all have inherited a portion of that nature that sinned, and in this way we participated, or all humanity was present in the loins of Adam (compare with Heb. 7:9-10), and as potentially present, we participated. The major point of this view is that we sinned in Adam's sin.

This explains v. 12. "All sinned" is in the aorist tense, referring to a single action, and points to the involvement of all in the first sin.

Further, the comparison of Christ and Adam makes some sense. The actions of one man in each case had tremendous effect. The parallel is not as complete in Augustine's view as it could be, for while Adam's action involved all of humanity, Christ's action is restricted to a smaller group. This view also explains how all can be made sinners by the action of one man.

Historically, this has been the most widely held view, and the idea that we inherit something from Adam is involved in the Arminian view and forms part of the view of some Calvinists. Nevertheless, this view does have some difficulties. If we all sinned, why is the emphasis on Adam's sin? And how can Paul say that those between Adam and Moses did not sin as did Adam? If all sinned in Adam, they sinned in precisely the same way Adam sinned. While Erickson adopts this view, with certain revisions, I do not think it offers the best interpretation of Rom. 5:12-19.

4. The Federal Headship answer: Adam sinned for us all. This view is associated with Calvin (though he also affirmed aspects of the Augustinian position) and Reformed theology in general. Adam's sin is special and determinative for all of humanity, because he sinned as our head, or our representative. This would be the situation if, for example, the professor chose only one student to take the final exam for all the class. If he passed, the whole class would pass. If he failed, the whole class too would fail. His grade would be imputed to the whole class. This seems to me to be the best explanation of Rom. 5.

It explains why it is the sin of Adam, and not Eve, that is noted. Paul certainly knows that Eve sinned first, but he only mentions Adam. The reason is not male chauvinism, but the idea of headship. This also explains how our sin is linked to Adam in v. 12. All sinned for he sinned, not only as an individual, but as our representative. For this reason, all who lived between Adam and Moses died, even though they had not sinned in the same way as did Adam. All of humanity shared in the mortality that resulted from Adam's sin. And in v. 19, all are constituted sinners because there is a true solidarity between the head and those he represents.

The parallel between Adam and Christ is understood as the parallel between the heads of two races. This is why Paul calls Christ "the last Adam" in I Cor. 15:45. In each case, the action of the head is determinative for all the members of the race. The sin of Adam is imputed to all the members of his race. The righteousness of Christ is likewise imputed to all the members of his race. But this does not lead to universalism, for Christ is not the head of humanity, but the head of the new humanity. One enters the race of Adam by means of birth (thus, it extends to all of humanity; v. 18); one enters the race of Christ by means of the new birth (thus it is limited to those who receive the gift of Christ; v. 17).

The advocates of this position do not deny that we are also guilty because of the sins we commit as individuals. We inherited a corrupt nature or a tendency toward sin, and it shows itself as soon as we are capable of moral action. We participate in and ratify the actions of our head. Similarly, we participate in the process of salvation, in that we receive the gift of salvation. But in both cases, everything begins with and hinges on the action of the head.

D. Evaluation. I feel a strong tension in the doctrine of original sin. On the one hand, the teaching of Romans 5, along with Eph. 2:3, John 3:19, Rom. 3:10-12 and 8:7, along with the fact that every human follows the path of Adam, leads to the conclusion that something happened with Adam that has had a profound effect on all humans. Paul seems to see at least physical mortality as a result of Adam’s sin, and sin seems to become inevitable for all humans as a result of a change in our nature that occurred at the fall. Otherwise, it becomes difficult to explain why

all without exception sin. If we are all simply repeating Adam's choice, one would think that surely someone would choose differently than did Adam.

On the other hand, some might ask how we can be held responsible for the actions of another? How is it just for God to impute guilt to us for Adam's sin? Moreover, how can we be held responsible even for the sins that we personally commit, if they spring from a nature that is corrupt through no choice of ours? Could it not be claimed that we are simply playing the hand we are dealt? The problem is exacerbated by the common understanding, dating back to Augustine, that after the fall we are *non posse non peccare* ("not able not to sin").

By way of contrast, some would point to the Bible's teaching on human responsibility. Ezek. 18:4, it is claimed, upholds the principle of individual responsibility. The fact that God judges us strongly implies that we are responsible for our choices. The Bible nowhere excuses human sin as unavoidable. Jesus lays the blame for the impending judgment of Jerusalem on the choice of its people ("you were unwilling," Matt. 23:37).

Thus, in formulating a doctrine of original sin, I think there will be a biblical tension. On the one hand, we cannot deny the reality of human solidarity and the fact that what we do affects others; Adam had a special role, and thus has affected all his descendants in a powerful way. In any case, those who are saved by imputed righteousness cannot afford to complain too strongly about imputed guilt.

At the same time, I would want to make the imputed guilt from Adam's sin conditional upon a responsible choice we make to ratify and follow the corrupt nature we receive from Adam. Sin may be inevitable due to the corruption of our nature, yet there is something left in human nature that makes us responsible for the choice to follow the desires of that nature. And, in point of fact, fallen human do differ in their choices. Hitler and Gandhi were both sinners, but differed greatly in how their depravity manifested itself.

This tension leads to a corresponding tension I feel in traditional debates between libertarian and compatibilist freedom, and leads me to be careful in how I speak of human inability (natural or moral). Whatever the effects of original sin, they do not erase human responsibility. (For a slightly different but very thorough presentation of these issues, see the paper by Ken Keathley, "A Soft Libertarian View of Human Freedom, Choice and Responsibility: Or, why bad dogs merely die but bad men go to hell").

E. A Related Issue. Discussions of original sin also raise the question of the fate of children who die in infancy. Are they spiritually dead and lost as well? To this question, we must acknowledge that Scripture says nothing directly about the fate of children who die before the age of accountability, but most theologies have found a way to make some provision for them.

Liberal theology has typically relied simply on God's love to affirm that God accepts all children into his heaven. Traditional Catholic theology used to see infant baptism as taking care of original sin but saw infants who died without baptism as destined for limbo, a position that was reversed in 2007 by Pope Benedict XVI's approval of the report of a Vatican advisory panel

that concluded earlier church teaching had never been officially endorsed by an authoritative council and that faithful Catholics had good grounds to hope that unbaptized infants could go to heaven.

Arminians could see prevenient grace as grounds for concluding that infants die with no guilt before God, and many would point to II Sam. 12:23 and Jesus' attitude toward children as further evidence. Calvinists have had a variety of approaches. Some have simply affirmed that God allows no non-elect children to die infancy; thus all who do die are among the elect and are thus saved. Others have seen infants saved by a special, secret application of Christ's atonement; some earlier Calvinists saw the children of believing parents as automatically included in the covenant community. Ronald Nash, in a recent book (*When a Baby Dies: Answers to Grieving Parent*), bases his belief in the salvation of those who die in infancy on the idea that judgment in the Bible is based on what we do "in the body" (II Cor. 5:10), as opposed to what was done by Adam.

I think the most cogent response is provided by the idea of an age of accountability. The fact that all die, even innocent infants, points to the fact that all suffer some of the effects of Adam's sin. But perhaps we may separate physical mortality and spiritual death, and make the second conditional upon reaching a point of being able to approve or reject the deeds that come from an inherited corrupt nature.

The idea of an age of accountability does seem to be supported by Rom.7:9-10. There Paul affirms that there was a time when he was alive (spiritually, for to say he was alive physically would be unnecessary), but that when the commandment came, sin came to life and he died (again, spiritually). Some believe Paul is reflecting here the occasion of a Hebrew boy's *bar mitzvah*, when he becomes a "son of the commandment." If so, it may be that prior to that time, Paul was neither saved nor lost, but safe. And, if this is so, it would imply that the "age of accountability" is around 12, far later than most think, but consistent with the ideas of some developmental psychologists. Parents and all who work with children would do well to ponder this issue, and perhaps reconsider the wisdom of accepting as valid the professions of faith of an increasing number of very young children.

Another possible response is simply to leave the fate of children who die before the age of accountability to the mercy and love of God. Scripture gives clear evidence of God's love for children and even commends their attitude as a model for those who seek heaven (see Jesus' attitude in Matt. 18:1-5). Though I think the age of accountability is the best response, I also rest in the justice and mercy of God's character, and see no reason to conclude that a biblical view of original sin leads to the conclusion that those who die in infancy are lost.

F. Results of Original Sin. Though we have touched somewhat upon this issue in the options outlined above, I think it would be good to clarify how each view of original sin sees the results of original sin in terms of human nature, guilt, and depravity.

1. For Pelagians, original sin has no result on human nature, no inherited guilt, and no touch of depravity.

2. For Arminians, they see human nature as either corrupt, or at least with an inevitable tendency toward sin. However, the guilt is removed by the universal gift of prevenient grace through the cross. Moreover, that same gift of prevenient grace balances out the effects of original sin on the will such that free will is a reality and depravity's effects are lessened.

3. For Augustinians and Calvinists, the results are much the same. Humanity inherits a corrupt, sinful nature that inevitably issues in personally committed sins. Thus, Augustine compared three stages in the history of humanity in this manner:

Before the Fall	**After the Fall**	**In Heaven**
The Time of Innocence	The Time of Responsibility	The Time of Full Salvation
Able not to sin	Not able not to sin	Not able to sin
Essential Humanity	Existential Humanity	Eschatological Humanity
Gen. 1-2	Gen. 3 - Rev. 19	Rev. 20-22

To what extent guilt accompanies that sinful nature is a matter of some difference, even within Calvinists. But all Calvinists agree that one of the results of original sin is depravity, which means the human will never chooses to trust Christ apart from divine intervention. There is freedom of will in the sense that there is no coercion exercised on the will. It simply acts in accordance with its nature. But human nature, being fallen and corrupt, never chooses for God, but is rather at enmity with God (Rom. 8:6-8). Thus Luther unequivocally denied the existence of the type of free will that Erasmus upheld, which implied that humanity possessed a power that allowed it to take the initiative in approaching God and thus meriting grace. For Luther and the Reformers and Augustine, total depravity involved the fallenness of all aspects of human nature: conscience (I Tim. 4:2), heart (Jer. 17:9), mind (Eph. 4:17-19), emotions (James 4:1), spirit (Eph. 2:1), and will (John 8:34). It does not mean we are as bad as possible, but that depravity touches every human faculty. Some say pervasive depravity is a more accurate description. Total depravity was also seen as involving total inability of the will in matters relating to God.

As I said above, I think it is important to maintain that there is enough freedom left to maintain moral responsibility. While we all inevitably sin, we do not always sin, and Scripture regards sin as something we willingly choose to do. Thus God is just in judging our sin. At the same time, human free will is too broken to cooperate in any way in salvation, apart from the gracious working of the Spirit. Our inability is not part of our God-created nature, but comes from our fallenness; our cooperation with our fallenness is what makes us morally culpable.

III. Theological Formulation of the Doctrine of Sin. While we want of course to incorporate all the biblical teaching in our theological formulation of the doctrine of sin, three elements call for special attention in our contemporary situation.

A. The Absoluteness of Morals. The presupposition of sin is that there are absolute rights and wrongs. Certainly there are gray areas and ethical dilemmas in life, and dogmatism on every issue is neither necessary nor attractive. Still, when all allowances have been made, there are many clear areas of right and wrong where we must say, "these things are not relative." Few maintain moral relativism when evil is done to them.

But the church seems to have lost its courage on these matters, and capitulated to the rampant relativism in our culture. It shows in our lack of church discipline, which does not reflect true Christian love, but the much less strenuous level of complacent tolerance. We must recover what Amy Carmichael calls "Calvary love," which holds others to the highest and reflects the moral absolutes of God's word.

Our gospel that proclaims the necessity of forgiveness of sins will fall on deaf ears unless there is a belief in the reality of sin, and that depends on the reality of a transcendent standard of right and wrong. So let us be gracious, and love at a higher, more costly level than mere tolerance. Let no one be able to accuse us of being rigid, intolerant, dogmatic, unloving fundamentalists. But let us stand firmly for absolutes, not in a condemning, angry way, but in a humble, loving spirit that adorns our message with the maximum winsomeness.

B. Alongside the absoluteness of moral standards, we must insist upon human responsibility. Again, sin cannot be sin unless humans are responsible for their actions. Machines cannot sin; animals cannot sin; beings who are fully determined by their genes or environments or psychological drives cannot sin. Without human responsibility there can be no human sin.

There is a promising resurgence of the idea of personal responsibility in our society today. Behind the drive for welfare reform has been the idea that persons are not victims of forces totally beyond their control, but must take at least a partial responsibility for their lives and actions and decisions.

We need to take care in our teaching of original sin and human depravity that we do not neglect the clear teaching that we are responsible and culpable for the sin in our lives. There is one passage that teaches us about our guilt from original sin; there are countless passages that uphold the fact that we are responsible for the actions that proceed from the sinful nature we inherit, for we approve and ratify and willingly enact the desires of that sinful nature. Can we really say in regard to sin, “I couldn’t help myself,” when help was available in Christ?

In the final analysis, the heart of the human problem is not education, or poverty, or dysfunctional families, or psychological maladjustment, or bad examples, or a deprived childhood, though all these do have real effects on individuals. The heart of the human problem is the human heart, which the Bible describes as "deceitful and beyond cure" (Jer. 17:9).

C. The Weightiness of Sin. In Anselm's famous work, *Cur Deus Homo?* (*Why God Became Man*), he denies the idea that God could simply forgive sin apart from atonement with the words, "You have not yet considered the weightiness of sin." The loss of a sense of the weightiness of sin, and the majesty of the One against whom all sin is directed, may be behind some of the theological debates of our day (see, for example, the confusion of Brian McLaren and some in the emerging church over why Christ had to die for sins to be forgiven).

For example, in Christian Theology I, we examine the debate going on concerning the possibility of salvation through general revelation for those who have never heard the gospel. In his contribution to one of the books involved in this debate (William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos, eds. *Through No Fault of Their Own? The Destiny of Those Who Have Never Heard* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), evangelical elder statesman Kenneth Kantzer notes that many of the contributions to this debate lack the sense of the enormity and horror of sin that shines through the words of Isaiah and Paul and John. Do we secretly doubt that those who worship other gods are truly sinning against God? Further, do we doubt in our heart of hearts that they or anyone else truly merits hell? Luther would say we need to begin with God by acknowledging that we deserve hell. Though some evangelicals might mouth these words, very few of us truly believe it. When God looks at the unbelieving world, does He feel sadness that they just don't know any better, or does their sin arouse His holy wrath?

Could a dim vision of the weightiness of sin also be behind the present day debate on annihilationism, which is discussed under the doctrine of eschatology? This also reveals the interconnectedness of the various doctrines of Christianity. When the majesty, transcendence and holiness of God are diminished, and the depravity of human nature denied, then inevitably the horror of sin and the rationale for hell is obscured.

This means recovery of a biblical doctrine of sin calls for a multi-pronged response. Sin is seen in all its horror in the light of the holy, loving, majestic, transcendent God against whom it is directed. Sin is seen in all its reality when an absolute, transcendent standard of right and wrong is upheld in a loving, humble way. Sin is seen as something for which we may justly be held guilty when our teaching on original sin does not obscure our personal responsibility and complicity in approving and enacting the desires of our sinful nature.

IV. Practical Applications. We want to turn now to some specific applications that we may draw from the doctrine of sin.

A. The first is a good general rule of thumb about sin, and how to avoid it. Sin usually arises out of a distortion of some legitimate need. Sin is essentially not creative, but it takes God's good gifts and distorts them.

One of my professors at Southern, William Hendricks, illustrated this with what he called the wheel of sin. He says the flesh, the sinful nature, operates in four areas or dimensions of distortion.

1. Pride is the distortion of the legitimate need for self-esteem and the desire for meaningful accomplishments in one's life. It occurs when we forget that all we have or do comes from God so that all the glory goes to Him (I Cor. 4:7), or when we seek to compare ourselves to others to be better than them (Gal. 6:4). This is the upward distortion.

2. Laziness is the distortion of the legitimate need for rest and leisure. The pattern of the Bible is 6 days of labor, and 1 day of rest. God created us to work, and it is part of our service to God to use our talents to glorify Him, to provide for our needs, to be able to share with others, and to better life for our neighbor (Prov. 6:6-11, Col. 3:23-24, Eph. 4:28, Titus 3:14).

Laziness can take mental and spiritual forms, too. When we lazily seek to get by with the minimum, rather than doing our best, we are guilty of the sin of laziness. This is the downward pull of sin.

3. The third distortion is outward, rebellion. Even this is a distortion of a legitimate need. We have a need for exertion, for effort, to use our mental, spiritual, and even physical muscles. The distortion occurs when we direct our energy against God, rather than for God and against sin and evil (Eph. 6:10-20, II Cor. 10:3-5). As Erickson said, the very essence of sin is anything that displaces God from His rightful place of preeminence. Rebellion seeks to push God outward from the center of our lives.

4. Finally, greed is the distortion of the legitimate need for food, clothing, shelter, some of the things of this world. Greed is possible for both rich and poor, for greed is the opposite of contentment and confidence in God's provision (Heb. 13:5, Matt. 6:33, Phil. 4:11-12). This is the inward distortion, seeking to pull everything into me.

Hendricks says this wheel of sin will roll over and crush us, unless we learn to live in the center, not being pulled or pushed, not allowing legitimate needs to become distorted. In my own experience, I have discovered that almost everything in the Christian life can be ruined and become an occasion of sin if pushed to an extreme. Grace can become a license for sin; zeal for holiness can become legalism; a heart for praise can forget the need for times of confession and weeping; self-examination can become sinful self-centeredness. The Christian life is the difficult and challenging task of keeping your balance against the distortions of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

B. A second practical pastoral care issue is dealing with sin and confession of sin in the life of the Christian. Is sin forgiven without confession? If I forget to confess some sin, is it eternally held against me? What is the importance of I John 1:9?

I trust that you already know how to deal with this, but just in case, let me respond. Sin breaks fellowship, but not one's relationship with God. Confession re-establishes the intimacy of fellowship with God, because you are now viewing your sin as God does, for confession means literally saying the same thing. You say about your sin what God says about your sin.

Well then, how specific does confession have to be? Do I have to mention every detail, or will a blanket confession do? The Catholics had a good point in the practice of specific confession, for it is good to be specific about all that is on our minds, and to hear specifically "God in Christ forgives you for this. Go in peace."

There is also some value in liturgical confessions, in getting us going and examining our lives before God (see James 5:16 as well). I think that periodic evaluation, especially in preparation for partaking of the Lord's Supper, should be part of every Christian's life.

But God is more interested in the state of our hearts than our memory. My point is that confession should be as specific as your consciousness of something between you and God is. Whatever He brings to your remembrance, that's what you need to confess. Times of inward evaluation are good, the use of written confessions and guides can be good, but the point is to deepen fellowship until you can worship with no blocks between you and God.

C. A third related issue is dealing with the two extremes of perfectionism and the "carnal Christian." Is it possible for a Christian to reach a state of sinless perfection? John Wesley thought so, if sin is defined in a very limited and definite way. I think Paul would have disagreed, based on the self-assessment he gave in Phil. 3:12-14, a time which was very late in his life. I think it is wrong to expect any believer to reach such a state, and I think it would be difficult to judge oneself to have reached a state of sinless perfection without falling prey to sinful arrogance.

But I think few of us really have struggles on that side. The more prominent question for us is the issue of the "carnal Christian." While I think that a state of carnality is possible for a genuinely saved person for a limited time, I think much of our thinking about carnal Christians is a way we have to soothe our consciences about the state of friends, family members, and perhaps ourselves.

It is difficult to read the NT and not conclude that genuine conversion always results in genuine change and a genuine dethroning of sin's controlling power in a person's life (see Matt. 7:21 and I John 3:6, 9 for just a few examples; one of the main thrusts of I John is that you can know you're saved because your life has been changed). If that has not happened, and no change is visible in a "convert's" life, something is wrong. In our context, the problem is often shallow evangelism and poor examples. In a denomination in which more than half the nominal members don't even meet the most basic criterion of church attendance, this is a critical issue that pastors need to recognize and address. The lives of millions of unsaved Southern Baptist church members are at stake.

D. Even among growing Christians there will be sin. Don’t be disillusioned or devastated by the sin within churches you serve, fellow Christian workers. or yourself. Learn to forgive and be forgiven, and start every day with a new commitment to seek holiness, even while we acknowledge our need for continuing repentance.

E. Learn to know your own susceptibility to temptation. Analyze what day of the week, what time of day, what place or person causes you most temptation. Recognize how your physical and emotional well-being affects your spiritual health and vulnerability.

F. Finally, I just want to call your attention to the definite historical link between brokenness over sin and spiritual awakenings. I think a careful study shows that the key, central experience in revivals or spiritual awakenings is an unusually clear and vital awareness of the real presence of Christ among His people. And the first effect of that presence is overwhelming brokenness over sin, leading to deep, heart-wrenching confession, often involving public confessions of Christians to one another, sometimes involving dramatic and deep conversion experiences. When Christ appears in all His brilliance, the dark places of our lives are exposed. This type of in-depth conviction of sin cannot be produced by human means (revival services, etc.); it is the work of the Holy Spirit. But we must pray for it, preach for it, and teach for it. And one factor that can hinder it is a small, superficial, and deficient understanding of sin. I hope our study here will help us remove this hindrance in our lives and the lives of those to whom we minister.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY II
UNIT 2: THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST
PART A: THE PERSON OF CHRIST
OUTLINE

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CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY II
UNIT 2: THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST
PART A: THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Introduction: We come now to Christology, the doctrine that gives our religion its name. We are *Christ*ians. The heart of our faith is Jesus Christ. He is the most crucial and distinctive doctrine of Christianity. Above all, it is Christ that must be at the center of our theology and proclamation. It is interesting to note that two of the most influential theologians in the history of Christianity, Martin Luther and Karl Barth, were two of the most Christo-centric theologians in church history as well. Good theology is always Christocentric.

We will follow the traditional division of theology and treat this doctrine in two sections: the person of Christ and the work of Christ. But in truth, the two cannot be so neatly separated. The disciples and Christians today come to know who Christ is through what He does and He is able to do what He does because of who He is.

Nevertheless, one aspect of His work -- the work of atonement or the Cross -- is so important that it demands separate treatment. So, in this first part, we will not be limited strictly to the person of Christ, but we will limit our consideration of the work of atonement to the second section of this doctrine.

Christ is such a central topic, especially in the New Testament, that it is hard to know where to start. In fact, theologians have had to develop a short hand way to refer to the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. We call all this the Christ-event. I want to delineate the biblical teaching of the doctrine of Christ under seven headings. We may call them the seven acts of the Christ-event.

I. Biblical Foundations: The Seven Acts of the Christ-Event.

A. He was Prophesied. In one sense, all of the Old Testament speaks of Jesus (according to Luke 24: 27, 44; John 5:39), but there are some strikingly specific prophecies of specific aspects of Christ's life.

For example, think of His lineage. He is the Seed of Abraham that blesses all families of the earth (Genesis 12:2), He is the Ruler from the Tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10), and the Son that Establishes the House of David Forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14), his birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), even the date of his birth (Dan. 9:25) are foretold. His death is foretold in awesome detail (Isaiah 53; Psalm 22), and the New Testament affirms that David himself foresaw the resurrection of the Messiah (Psalm 16:10). Some have even seen the prophecies going back as far as Genesis 3:15, sometimes called the *Protoevangelium*. Christ is seen as the Seed of the Woman who Crushes the Seed of the Serpent (see Romans 16:20 for a still more complete and future fulfillment of this prophecy).

A century or more ago, fulfilled prophecies were regarded as a strong part of the apologetics for Christianity. It proved that Christ was who He claimed to be. But, in recent decades, this aspect of the argument for the Christian faith had been softened or omitted

altogether, even by many evangelicals, and I am not sure why. Perhaps it doesn't seem to have as much experiential relevance for people today.

Liberals, of course, deny the possibility of miraculous predictive prophecies. Thus, some would suggest that Isaiah 53 really refers to the nation of Israel and, as many scholars and Bible translators insist, Isaiah 7:14 does not really prophesy a virgin birth, and Micah 5:2 must have been a coincidence. However, the cumulative evidence of predictive prophecy still seems very strong to me.

All the predictive prophecies point to the person of Jesus, but that should not obscure the fact that the second person of the Trinity existed long before Jesus of Nazareth. We mentioned last semester the possibility of Christophanies in the Old Testament (the Angel of the Lord, the Son of Man walking in the fiery furnace), but, in any case, the New Testament clearly affirms the pre-existence of God the Son (John 1:1-2; John 8:58). While Bethlehem is the beginning of Jesus, it is not the beginning of the whole story. In fact, while it is possible to translate this verse otherwise, Revelation 13:8 can be seen as speaking of the Lamb of God "slain from the creation of the world."

In any case, there are two positive contributions predictive prophecy makes to the doctrine of Christ. The first is that the birth of Jesus was not a hasty emergency plan thrown together after the Fall. God created us, knowing it would cost His Son to redeem us; Christ created us, knowing He would die to recreate us.

Second, the predictive prophecies of the Old Testament give us a strong basis for Jesus' messianic self-consciousness and form the indispensable background for understanding His life and ministry. Even if God the Son voluntarily restricted the exercise of His omniscience as part of His identification with humanity (a point we will discuss shortly), there was still plenty of material from which Jesus could devise His understanding of His nature and mission as God's Messiah. The evidence is pretty clear in the New Testament that Jesus did, in fact, consciously see Himself as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. As well, His favorite self-designation, Son of Man, is a title taken from Daniel 7:13-14. He saw Himself in the light of the Old Testament prophecies, and if we were to see Him correctly, we must see Him in that light as well.

B. He was Born. As J. I. Packer notes in his book, *Knowing God*, some people have the wrong problem with Christianity. He says we should not really stumble over the Good Friday miracle of crucifixion or even the Easter Sunday miracle of resurrection. Rather, he says, the greatest miracle of all is the Christmas miracle of incarnation. If that miracle is true, then all the others make sense. If God truly was incarnate in Jesus Christ, then, of course, His death would have tremendous saving significance and, of course, His resurrection would be expected.

There are two aspects to the birth of Christ to which we must give attention. The first is the nature of that birth; that it involves an incarnation. The second is the manner of the birth; that Christ is born of a virgin.

1. The incarnation. The very word "incarnation" means "infleshment," the union of a spiritual being with a fleshly human body. While the incarnation is assumed throughout the entire New Testament, there are two passages that speak very specifically to the nature of the incarnation.

a. John 1:14. John's gospel begins with the description of what he calls "the Word." He describes the Word as co-equal with God, co-eternal with God. The word he uses for "Word," *logos*, was a term of great status among both Jews and Greeks. Among the Greeks, it was used to refer to the very principle of reason that was the structure of the entire universe. Among the Jews, it was a reference to God's creative breath. In verse 14, John states that this exalted Word "became flesh." To the Muslim the claim "Allah became flesh" sounds blasphemous, yet this claim lies at the heart of Christianity.

The full humanity of Christ is affirmed not only in this verse but throughout the New Testament. For example, 1 John 4:2 states that anyone who denies the humanity of Jesus is teaching false doctrine. In fact, he says that such teaching comes from the spirit of Antichrist. First Corinthians 15:21 says that since by a man came death, Adam, by a man came the resurrection from the dead. Hebrews 2:14 affirms the necessity of Jesus sharing in flesh and blood the nature of those He came to redeem. Hebrews 4:15 says that our Redeemer, our Great High Priest, had to be like us, tempted like we are, but without sin. Luke 2:52 affirms that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. John 4:6-7 says that Jesus was tired and thirsty.

All these verses simply amplify what John said succinctly in John 1:14, "The Word became flesh." It took the church more than four centuries to come to a full and final formulation of all that is involved in that statement, but the idea of full deity and full humanity are there from the beginning. The problem in formulating it came from two directions. One problem was the difficulty of Arius and others in accepting the full deity of Christ (still a problem with modern day cults). The second major problem was in defining "nature." If the Word became united with a human nature, what is involved in a nature? Does it mean that Jesus had two wills, one divine and one human? Did He have a human soul and a divine mind? Such specific questions were, at times, important but are not addressed specifically by Scripture. We will trace the historical development of Christology later but, for now, we must emphasize only that it all stems from John 1:14.

b. Philippians 2:5-11. This is the second major passage explaining the idea of the incarnation. It starts with an affirmation of Christ's pre-existence in the very nature of God. It says "being in very nature God." "Being" implies that He continually existed before the incarnation. Thus, it refers to the pre-existence of Christ. He had equality with God, He was by nature divine. That word is *morphe*, which means "nature" or "essence." Thus, He had equality with God, but He did not hold on to it. This is the meaning of a very difficult phrase about not grasping equality with God. There seems to be a contrast here between Adam, who was a human who sought to be God, and Christ existing as God but choosing to unite Himself with humanity. What is involved in that union is described as an emptying of Himself. This is the essence of incarnation, a union of perfect humanity and undiminished deity. But of what did Christ empty Himself? How can deity and humanity be united? These are the questions raised by this passage.

The Greek word for "empty Himself" is *kenoo*, and, thus, this question is called the kenotic question, or the kenosis. Of what did Christ empty Himself? What happened to the second person of the Trinity in the process of the incarnation? For us, adding something means an increase, but for the Eternal Word, adding a human nature involved a process of emptying

Himself. How are we to understand this? The passage is difficult, containing several words used only once in the New Testament. There are three general lines of interpretation.

(1) In the incarnation, the eternal Word emptied Himself. In order to add a full and real humanity, He laid aside His deity, or at least part of his divine attributes. Being human necessarily involved such loss. Thus, Jesus was fully human but not fully God. The problem with this is the ample evidence of the New Testament for the deity of Christ (which we will discuss later). The deity of Christ has been attacked since the 19th century and especially recently (see John Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate*), but Scripture is clear and orthodox Christianity has held since the Council of Nicea that Christ is fully divine.

(2) In the incarnation, the eternal Word "emptied Himself" in the sense that He left his exalted position. He left the glory of heaven, the company of the Father and the angels, for a dirty stable and sinful humanity. No missionary has ever experienced such culture shock.

Certainly this loss of position is part of what is involved in Jesus' self-emptying. John 17:5 states that Jesus had left the glory of the Father to come to earth. Philippians 2:5-11 traces the descent of Christ into deep humiliation: taking the form of a servant, being found in appearance as a man, humbling Himself unto obedience, even obedience unto death on a cross. Of course, the passage concludes with God responding to the Son's humiliation by exalting Him to the highest place. But is there more involved in the emptying than just a loss of position?

Luther said no. Jesus was omniscient even in the crib; omnipresent in the universe while present in Jesus of Nazareth in a special way. He continued to sustain all things while sucking on His thumb. This was one reason why Luther could hold to the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Even after His ascension, Christ's body continued to share in the divine attribute of omnipresence (communication of properties). The ubiquity or omnipresence of Christ's body enabled Luther to claim that Christ was really present in the Lord's Supper. So, for Luther, emptying had no reference to the divine attributes or divine nature.

(3) Calvin, as he often does, takes a middle position (see *Institutes*, II.13.2). The emptying involved a voluntary decision on Christ's part to veil or restrain his divinity by taking on a fully human nature and choosing to experience fully what it means to be human. Thus, Christ was able to learn, to grow in physical strength, to accept physical limitations. He never lost His divine attributes, but He chose to restrain the exercise of them. This would also seem to imply that Christ's miracles, at least at times, were not performed by His own divine power, but by the power of the Father working through Him to validate that Jesus is, indeed, His chosen and beloved Son (see Matt. 12:28). As Daniel Akin puts it, in the incarnation, Christ laid aside “the free and voluntary use of his divine attributes.”

Calvin, of course, fully believed in the deity of Christ, too, and believed that as God, he was still omnipresent in the universe while his human nature had a localized presence in Nazareth. Thus he separated the two natures of Christ and did not see the property of omnipresence communicated to the human nature. Exactly what aspects or properties of Christ existed apart from or outside of the human nature of Jesus are matters of debate among Calvin scholars, and is called the question of the extra-Calvinisticum (see *Institutes*, II.13.4 for the basis).

For this reason, Calvin could not agree with Luther on the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The body Christ had accepted in the incarnation did not share in His omnipresence even after His ascension. As divine and thus spirit, Christ is omnipresent and, thus, Calvin can speak of a real spiritual presence in the Lord's Supper but not the real physical presence as Luther believed. This was the major point of division between the Lutherans and Reformed (and Zwinglians, who were basically Reformed also).

To a degree, this is a "how" question (How can deity and humanity fit together?), so we do not expect a specific Scriptural answer. Full deity and full humanity are affirmed clearly in Scripture; how they fit together is not. I take a position close to that of Calvin. I think the incarnate Christ retained all His divine attributes but chose not to exercise them, at least at times, to identify fully with us. Thus, His deity was veiled (except for the transfiguration) and restricted. The self-emptying involved humiliation (loss of position) and self-limitation (voluntary non-use of divine attributes).

Thus, we may define the incarnation as that event in history in which a full human nature was added to the eternal, divine, undiminished nature of the second person of the Trinity. The Word always was God, yet became flesh. Christ existed eternally in the essence of God; at a point in time He emptied Himself. That emptying involved the humiliation of Christ (loss of position in glory), and, in my opinion, the voluntary self-restraint or self-veiling of the divine nature for the purpose of identification with humanity.

2. The second item we must discuss is the manner in which Christ entered human existence. We normally call it the virgin birth, but actually what we mean is the virginal conception. The birth of Christ was normal, as far as we know. It is His conception that was different--He was conceived of a virgin. However, since the traditional term for this issue is the virgin birth, we do not need to change it as long as we understand exactly what we are talking about.

This doctrine is accepted by conservative Christians but increasingly has been denied by virtually all liberals and many neo-orthodox theologians as well. Many people in churches have their doubts as well, according to recent polls. The basic reason for these doubts and denials is the premise of naturalism, that God does not work in miraculous ways. But since many also raise questions about exactly what Scripture does teach about the virgin birth and its importance, we will consider three issues in connection with the virgin birth (or virginal conception).

a. Does Isaiah 7:14 predict it? The basis for denial of the virgin conception, or virgin birth, is really antisupernaturalism, but many liberal and neo-orthodox theologians also say Isaiah 7:14 is not a prediction of the virgin birth. They say, first of all, that the word used for virgin in Isaiah 7:14 (*alma*), is not the normal Hebrew word for virgin, and they say that a virgin birth of Christ could not possibly be a sign for Ahaz 700 years before the birth of Christ. Thus, the word used in Isaiah 7:14 and the context make it impossible to see Isaiah 7:14 as a prediction of the virgin conception of Christ. How do we respond to these two claims?

First, while *alma* is not the technical word for a virgin, it does represent a young woman, one of whose normal characteristics is virginity. The fact is that in the Old Testament, there is no instance where it can be proven that *alma* designates a young woman who is not a virgin (see

Genesis 24:43; Song of Solomon 6:8). Thus, while Isaiah 7:14 might not have led Ahaz to look for a supernatural and miraculous conception in his day, it certainly allowed for it later on. And, when Matthew later read Isaiah 7:14 in Greek (where *alma* is translated by *parthenos*, the normal Greek word for virgin), he saw the miraculous virginal conception of Christ as a deeper, more complete fulfillment of that verse. Thus, on linguistic grounds, we may say that the Hebrew word *alma* holds no barrier to interpreting Isaiah 7:14 as a prophecy of the virginal conception of Christ, and since Matthew, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, interpreted Jesus' virginal conception as a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, we may conclude that Isaiah 7:14 is, in fact, a prophecy of the virginal conception of Christ.

The second difficulty we mentioned was that of contextual inappropriateness. Was Ahaz to look for a miraculous virginal conception in his day? If not, how was the birth of Christ 700 years later to be a sign to him? We answer that Isaiah 7:14 has a dual predictive purpose. There was to be a near fulfillment in Ahaz's day and an ultimate fulfillment in Jesus. The first fulfillment would come in the birth of a son to a woman who was a virgin at the time the prophet was speaking. The verse does not require a virginal conception of that child. As the later verses of Isaiah 7 made clear, the significance of that child is that before he grows to be very old ("before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right"), Judah's enemies will be invaded by the king of Assyria.

The significance of the child lies not in the manner of his conception but in the timing of his birth: that he will signal the soon coming invasion of Assyria. The identity of this child is disputed. Some see it as a reference to Isaiah's son, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (see Isaiah 8:1). The second suggestion is that it may be the royal child, Hezekiah. In either case, Isaiah 7:14, in its first fulfillment, does not require a virginal conception but only the birth of a child at a significant moment. It is only in the birth of Jesus that this prophecy is completely and ultimately fulfilled; that is, filled full of meaning.

Thus, we conclude that Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy of the virgin birth of Christ. The word spoken by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of the prophet, Isaiah, communicated a message to Ahaz in his day but carried a deeper significance which the apostle Matthew, writing under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, was enabled to see in the conception of Christ.

Whether Isaiah himself saw both fulfillments is a matter of some discussion. I think Scripture must be interpreted in accordance with the intention of the author; but Scripture has a dual authorship, and sometimes I think the Spirit intended a level of meaning the human author did not recognize, as is the case in Is. 7:14.

b. Does the Bible teach it? The central verses are Matthew 1:16-25 and Luke 1:26-38. Both clearly teach three truths:

(1) Jesus' conception was supernatural. Joseph and Mary were not ignorant of basic biology; they knew how babies were conceived. That's why Joseph was going to divorce Mary (Matthew 1:19) and was why Mary was so shocked by Gabriel's words (Luke 1:34). Both clearly affirm the virginal conception of Jesus.

(2) Both affirm the agency of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:20 says the conception is "from the Holy Spirit"; Luke 1:35 says the Holy Spirit will "come upon" Mary

and that His power will "overshadow" her. They do not give a technical scientific description of the conception but do affirm that it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

(3) Both teach that His name will be Jesus. Luke adds that He will be both the descendant of David and the Son of God (Luke 1:32-35).

Despite this clear teaching, there has been criticism here too. First, it is claimed that the genealogies of Matthew and Luke conflict. Both clearly indicate that Jesus was not the biological son of Joseph (Matthew 1:16; Luke 3:23); but regardless of that, why do the genealogies conflict? The usual answer is that Matthew traces the genealogy to the legal or royal side, while Luke traces the physical side, either of Mary or Joseph (for more information, see the book by J. G. Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*).

A second criticism has been that only Matthew and Luke have this teaching. Why do Mark, John, and Paul not speak of this doctrine? In response, it should be noted that they in no way deny this doctrine. In fact, all they teach is completely consistent with it. The simplest answer seems to be that it just was not their interest. Mark's gospel is concerned with the actions of Jesus; John begins with the pre-existence of the Word; and Paul's focus is the Cross. A second response is to ask how many times do we need something to be taught before we believe it? Two independent, totally clear accounts seem more than sufficient to me.

c. How important is it? We need to be careful to neither underemphasize nor overemphasize the theological importance of the doctrine of the virgin birth. Many liberals and neo-orthodox theologians consider it of little importance, and I cannot say that it is absolutely essential to salvation. Millard Erickson notes that it is not mentioned in any of the evangelistic sermons in the book of Acts nor in any summaries of the gospel in the New Testament. Daniel Akin adds that God could have chosen other supernatural means for bringing Christ into the world, but this is the way he chose.

Nevertheless, this belief is important for several reasons. First, Scripture teaches it, and if we accept Scripture, we must affirm this doctrine. Second, while it is not essential for salvation, denial of it may weaken our view of Christ and lead to other, more dangerous distortions. Third, the virgin birth of Christ serves to highlight His two natures. He is fully human, "born of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). He is also fully divine, and the virgin birth reflects that fact.

The danger of overemphasizing its importance comes mainly from Catholics who think the virgin birth is necessary to protect Jesus from the stain of original sin. I think this represents a misunderstanding of original sin. It would seem to imply either than original sin is transmitted only through the father or that sin is inseparable from the sexual act that leads to conception (a misunderstanding of Psalm 51:5 that Augustine unfortunately advocated).

The first idea, that original sin is transmitted only through the father, is seriously weakened by the fact that men and women equally inherit a sinful nature. Why didn't Jesus contract original sin through his mother? Some Catholics realized this problem and promoted the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, that she was preserved from original sin by a miraculous, "clean" (but not virginal) conception. But Scripture says nothing of this. As to the second idea, it reflects Augustine's personal struggles with sexual sin and overlooks the original

goodness of sexuality as created by God. While it certainly may be misused, sex is not evil in itself and Psalm 51:5 simply teaches that we are sinful from birth.

But, if Jesus received His human nature from Mary and she had a fallen human nature, did Jesus also inherit a fallen human nature? For some positions, such an affirmation would involve no problems. For example, for Pelagians who believe we inherit only a bad example from Adam, saying Jesus inherited a fallen nature is not a theological problem. It may even be possible to view fallen human nature as involving only a weakening or openness to temptation. Jesus could have possessed such a human nature and still live a sinless life (this seems to be the view of Karl Barth).

Erickson has a stronger view of the effects of original sin; that is, we inherit a nature which is corrupt. Thus, he, following a line of interpretation that goes back to Calvin, postulates that the influence of the Holy Spirit miraculously cleansed the human nature passed on to Jesus. The virgin birth was God's chosen way to highlight that work of the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit could equally have cleansed a human nature produced in a normal way. Thus, the virgin birth was appropriate, but not absolutely necessary to preserve Jesus from original sin.

Others have suggested that God created both the divine and human natures, so that Jesus received his human nature unstained from God, rather than from Mary. She was just the container through which Jesus passed. I don't think this makes sense in light of the descriptions of the conception in Luke or Matthew, and the human genealogies. Nor is it theologically necessary.

My own view is that we inherit a sinful corrupt nature, but it is transmitted to us, not physically or genetically, but representatively. We received it not because Adam and Eve were our ancestors, but because Adam was our federal head. His actions and their results are imputed to all the members of Adam's race. But Christ is not a member of Adam's race; rather, He is the second Adam. Since Adam is not His head, Adam's sin is not imputed to Christ. He receives the original human nature as God designed it before the Fall. Thus, again, while the virgin birth was an appropriate way to show the supernatural origin of the Christ child, it was not necessary to preserve Christ from original sin.

To those who argue that Christ was not fully human because he did not inherit our sinful human nature, I would say that represents a misunderstanding of human nature. Is sin inherent in what it means to be human? Certainly not. Jesus was as human as Adam was before the fall and fully understands our humanity. By virtue of the Cross, He even understands what it feels like to be sinful. He became sin for us, but the nature He received at birth was free from what we inherit from Adam because He is the second Adam.

So let us continue to affirm the importance of the virgin birth of Christ, but do so for the right reasons.

C. He Lived. Normally, we would focus more on the death of Christ than His life, but it was His life that first attracted and amazed His disciples. Not only was it a life without sin, but it was a life filled with activity. While the gospels could easily be sufficient material for a lifetime of study, we will limit our exploration to three events in His life and three aspects of His ministry.

1. Three key events.

a. Baptism (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:31-34). This event is recorded in all three synoptic gospels and is alluded to in the gospel of John. Contrary to adoptionist Christologies that see this event as the point at which Jesus became God's Son, it is rather the point at which Jesus the Son began His public ministry. And it is a ministry characterized by identification. In coming to John, Jesus identified Himself with the ministry of His forerunner. In coming for baptism, He identified Himself with sinful humanity; and in His response, God the Father, quoting from Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1, identified His Son as Messiah, but a Messiah who would live and die as a Suffering Servant. Thus, He is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to test His true willingness to be this type of Messiah.

b. Period of temptation (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). There are many interesting points in these passages. There is the identification of the Spirit as the One who led or literally cast (Mark 1:12) Jesus into this situation, which shows us that testing can be divinely sent to strengthen us. There is the comparison often made between the temptations faced by Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:6), the temptations listed in 1 John 2:16, and the three temptations faced by Jesus. Actually, I think it is more accurate to see all three temptations faced by Jesus as temptations to be a spectacular Son rather than a Suffering Servant. There is also the important point to note that Jesus always responded with Scripture, and that Satan did have to flee for a time.

The theological question raised by this event is called the peccability or impeccability of Christ. It is agreed by both sides that Christ did not sin; the question is could Christ sin? Generally, most Arminians believe Christ could but did not sin, while most Calvinists believe He could not sin. Those who hold to peccability believe that the possibility of sin must be there for temptation to be real. The other side emphasizes the impossibility of sin for one who has not only a human nature but a divine nature.

I think this is one of the more useless and fruitless of theological debates. Either way, we want to affirm that the temptations were real; that it was not easy for Jesus (see Hebrews 5:7-8), and that He did not sin. The more interesting question for me is, where did the gospel writers get their information? Only Jesus and Satan were present. I believe that Jesus told them, and I believe that He told them to comfort, encourage, and instruct them. It should serve the same purposes for us.

c. The transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36; 2 Peter 1:16-18). Some see this event as the fulfillment of the prophecy that some in Jesus' day would not face death before they saw the Son coming in His Kingdom, a prophecy which immediately precedes the transfiguration in all three synoptic accounts. But why would Christ say some would not taste death when the event in question was only six days away? I think it more likely that the prophecy is fulfilled at the resurrection and that the transfiguration is included to give us a glimpse of Christ's true glorious nature, a reminder that He is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets, and gives us another reaffirmation of the Son by the Father.

2. His ministry. What did Jesus do? See Matt. 9:35.

a. He taught. The most common title for Jesus used by His apostles was Rabbi or Teacher. This is how Jesus would have been described by an objective observer in His situation. He was a wandering teacher. It is His most common activity. Matthew's gospel is constructed around five blocks of teaching material (Matthew 5:1-7:28, 10:5-11:1, 13:3-53; 18:1-19:1; and 24:4-26:1), perhaps in parallel to the five books of Moses, and John 14-17 (the upper room discourse) contains some of the deepest teaching in all of the New Testament.

Furthermore, as John Wenham has suggested, recognition of Jesus as a wandering teacher gives us an explanation for why many of Jesus' sayings are found in slightly different settings and slightly different wordings in different gospel accounts. The imaginative reconstruction of these sayings by form and redaction critics overlook the simple fact that Jesus was a traveling teacher and preacher and, like all teachers and preachers, He often said some of the same things a number of times in slightly different forms in slightly different settings (for more detailed information on Jesus as a teacher, see Robert Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teaching*).

b. He preached the Kingdom of God. Increasingly, New Testament scholarship has recognized the proclamation of the Kingdom as the center and heart of the message of Jesus. They have not been as united in understanding what Jesus meant by the Kingdom. Was He prophesying an imminent future apocalyptic invasion of God, which He tragically tried to bring about through His own ministry and death? (See Albert Schweitzer, *The Search for the Historical Jesus*.) Or was He preaching that the Kingdom had, in fact, arrived in His own person, as the advocates of realized eschatology contend?

I find it hard to see how anyone can miss the fact that in Jesus' teaching, the Kingdom is both present and future. Certainly, the Kingdom is present in Jesus. God the King had drawn nigh. Matthew 12:28 says, the kingdom "has come upon you." Luke 17:21 is better translated not as the kingdom of God "is within you," but as the kingdom is "in front of you." In Jesus, the reigning power of God was present.

Yet the theme of His parables was that His presence did not signal the immediate end of oppression, the overthrow of Rome, and the final victory of righteousness. Rather, the mustard seed must grow; the leaven must work all the way through the dough; we must wait until the harvest at the end of the age. The Kingdom has already been inaugurated, but not yet consummated. This already/not yet tension is one of the most central themes of New Testament theology and the Christian life.

c. He performed miracles. One of the most interesting aspects of Christ's ministry is His miraculous works. They are interesting because He did not seek them out so much as they sought Him. Demons confronted Him, the sick sought Him, in fact, they besieged Him. Moreover, while His deeds were evidence of His identity as God's Son, He did not perform miracles on demand as a sign. Rather, He called such sign-seeking characteristic of a wicked and adulterous generation.

It seems that Jesus performed miracles for four reasons: (1) at times, as a sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 12:28); (2) at times, as a response to human faith (Matthew 9:2, 22); (3) in many cases, because He was moved with compassion (Luke 7:12-15;

Matthew 9:35); and (4) less often, in order to awaken faith (John 2:11). Less often, perhaps, because he realized the danger of creating sign seekers, rather than faithful followers.

It is not completely clear to me whether He performed these miracles by the exercise of His own divine omnipotence, or whether, since He had decided to limit the exercise of His divine attributes during his incarnation, He performed miracles only as the Father acted through Him. Certainly, His works revealed His special relationship with God, but He often attributed His works to doing only what the Father commanded Him. So, either position can be argued. Either way, we should note that Jesus did not heal every sick person in Palestine. Indeed, the Scripture says He could not do much in Nazareth because of their blindness and unbelief (Mark 6:4).

D. He Died. This is the focal point of the New Testament. The Old Testament prophesies this (Isaiah 53; Luke 24:44). The gospels particularly emphasize this. Approximately one-third of the material in the gospels treats the last week, the Cross and the resurrection accounts. The gospels are, as one has called them, "passion narratives with extended introductions." Paul calls the Cross and the resurrection the most important points in the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3). With all this emphasis, it is not surprising that there have been many interpretations of the significance of the death of Christ. We will consider this question in great detail when we turn to the work of Christ which does center on His atoning work on the Cross.

E. He Rose. The resurrection lies clearly at the heart of the Christian faith. Without it, the Cross loses its importance, and, as Paul says, our faith is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:17). With it, millions of Christians have faced death with a song on their lips. We will trace its apologetic importance and theological significance shortly; but for now, let us examine some of the key elements of the evidence for the resurrection. (For a listing of 15 lines of evidence, see Patterson in Akin, *Theology for the Church*, 594).

1. The evidence.

a. The biblical writers are unanimous in testifying that Jesus truly died. Friedrich Schleiermacher first proposed the "swoon theory" nearly 200 years ago, and it has been revived by H. Schoenfield in *The Passover Plot*. This theory, which suggests that Jesus fainted and revived in the tomb, flies in the face of Scripture and reason.

b. Jesus' friends did not expect a resurrection. Despite the hints in the Old Testament (Psalm 16:10), and all that Jesus had said (John 11:25), Paul is correct in saying that it was Christ who "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). Jesus' followers were without hope, dejected. We get a glimpse in the wistful words of the two on the road to Emmaus: "we had hoped that He was the one" (Luke 24:21).

c. The tomb was empty. Again, this is the unanimous testimony of the gospels, and is virtually unchallenged. The suggestion that the disciples went to the wrong tomb is really pretty ludicrous and is rarely suggested. More common are the theories that someone, either Joseph of Arimathea, the disciples, or the Roman or Jewish authorities, stole the body. But if the disciples stole the body, would they die proclaiming the resurrection? If the authorities, why not produce the body rather than persecute the Christians? And what about the guards that were there? All these ideas have holes.

d. Christ appeared at least half a dozen times: to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18); on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13-32); in the Upper Room (John 20:19-23); to Thomas (John 20:24-29); in Galilee (John 21); and at His ascension (Acts 1:1-11). No wonder Luke says he gave, "many convincing proofs that He was alive" (Acts 1:3). These multiple appearances make hallucination theories (D. F. Strauss, Ernst Renan) much more unbelievable than a resurrection.

e. The early disciples preached the fact of the resurrection (Acts 2:24, 3:15, 4:10, 5:30). It was the central point of their proclamation. They had seen many men die on a cross, they knew of only one who had been raised. In the face of persecution and even death, they maintained this confession. This makes the stolen body theories implausible. Many martyrs and revolutionaries have died for a lie; few have died cheerfully for a lie knowing it to be a lie. The disciples did not steal the body. Neither did the authorities, for if they had, they would have produced it and there would be no need to persecute Christians.

f. Paul boldly put the resurrection at the heart of the gospel and claimed to have a vast number of eyewitnesses at the resurrection who were still alive and could testify to it (1 Corinthians 15:6).

The inescapable conclusion is that Christ is risen and alive. In light of that new truth, the disciples began to understand the Cross and their own destiny in Christ. Still today, it is our greatest comfort.

2. The Importance of the Resurrection.

We may summarize the theological importance of the resurrection in four statements:

a. It vindicates the work of the Cross;
b. It openly proclaims Christ as God's Son (Romans 1:4);
c. It guarantees our resurrection and victory over death; and
d. It is the basis for Christ's ascension and exaltation, to which we next turn our attention.

F. He Ascended. We may wonder why Jesus ascended. Why didn't He go out into all the world and preach the gospel Himself? They couldn't kill Him anymore, and a resurrected man could certainly command attention. He didn't do so because His desire is for faithful followers, not sign seekers. He didn't do this also because His plan includes us and because His plan is better than going out Himself. Rather than going from place to place, He would send His Spirit into all the world, wherever His people go. As long as He remained, Christianity would always have a geographical center (wherever Christ was). So, it was good and necessary that Christ leave and send His Spirit (John 16:7-15).

So, He ascended to the right hand of the Father where He intercedes as our Great High Priest (see Romans 8:34; Hebrews 2:14-18; Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 7:20-25). There are three questions we need to raise about His ascension and intercession.

1. What did the risen Christ bring back to the Trinity? The answer is a sinless, glorified human nature. Remember, God is, by nature, spirit and invisible. But Jesus could be seen even after the resurrection, because He never lost His human nature. That is why He can be our Great High Priest.

This has great comfort for us. He still knows and understands and is still with us (Acts 9:4 "why are you persecuting me?"). He doesn't just remember, He still knows. But did He then add something to the Trinity? The answer is yes and no. The Trinity has been, is, and will always be the perfect expression of deity. But Jesus brought to the Trinity a human nature that was not there before. So, the Trinity, as God, was not changed, but something has been added. I do not think this violates a proper understanding of divine immutability.

A second aspect of this is God's knowledge and empathy. Surely as our Creator, God has always known us perfectly. That is true. But the emphasis in the book of Hebrews is that now, we know God really understands. I do not think we can say whether or not the incarnation truly adds to God's knowledge of humanity, but it definitely makes it easier for humans to believe that God really understands.

2. The second question we must ask is, What is this intercession? It does not add to the work of the Cross because that is neither necessary nor possible. It would not seem to be some prayer or request that Christ is making for us because our Father already knows our needs. And neither is Jesus trying to persuade the Father to do something for us as if Jesus was our friend and the Father not. Our Father loves us and does not need to be persuaded. Nor is Jesus helping the Father to remember something because the Father only forgets our sin. Then, what is this intercession? Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:20-25 link it to our salvation. He intercedes for us, answering the accusations of the devil and even the accusations from our own conscience. He intercedes by simply showing the nail prints in His hands and opening the Lamb's Book of Life. He intercedes assuring and guaranteeing our salvation.

3. The third question we may ask is since Christ is ascended, how is He present in the world today?

First, we must note that the ascension does mean a real absence of Christ. In a recent book (*Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology*), Douglas Farrow notes the surprising lack of attention given to the doctrine of ascension. He shows that there are more allusions to the ascension in the New Testament than we commonly think of, and that it holds more implications for the church today than we often realize.

For example, if Christ really has ascended, then the church must be an eschatological community, always looking forward to his return. In the meantime, we must be a pneumatic community, because the primary means of Christ's presence in the world today is the Spirit, sent to be "another comforter" (John 14:16). But the Spirit's principal tool in revealing Christ is the Word, so it must be pervasively present in the church (as Luther and the Reformers insisted).

As a Spirit-indwelt community, the church as Christ's body enjoys something of His presence when they gather in His name (Matthew 18:20), although the reality of the ascension should guard against pushing a literal interpretation of the metaphor "body of Christ." In the

church's life, there has been tremendous controversy over the nature of Christ's presence in the Supper. Here again, our pneumatic nature, I think, gives us a clue of the nature of Christ's presence in the Supper (more on this later this semester). For now, I think we may affirm that we enjoy something of Christ's presence whenever we make trusting use of "the means of grace" (prayer, Scripture, fellowship, service, the ordinances/sacraments).

G. He Will Return. Since this topic belongs more to the doctrine of eschatology, we will defer discussion of it to Christian Theology III.

II. Historical Illumination.

A. The Road to Chalcedon. The pre-eminent problem of the patristic period was Christology, the doctrine of Christ, in particular, the person of Christ. At issue was how to relate to the obvious humanity of Jesus to the equally obvious deity of Christ. The development and definition of the relationship of the deity and humanity of Christ came gradually, as the church responded to various heresies along the way (historically, heresies have been one of the most important factors in spurring the church to clear definition of doctrine). The position reached at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 is generally recognized as the statement of classical Christology, accepted almost universally by the church until the Enlightenment and still accepted by the great majority of evangelical Christians. But the road to Chalcedon involved confrontation with a variety of heresies along the way.

1. The christological formula of the New Testament: Jesus is Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3). This simple statement effectively overruled two of the earliest heresies in the area of Christology: Docetism and Ebionitism. The earliest of these, Docetism, comes from the Greek verb, *dokeo*, which means to seem or appear. Christ only seemed to be human; He was really divine. This was attractive to Gnostics who could not accept the idea that anything material could be anything other than dirty and sinful. Thus, Jesus, the epitome of spirituality, must not be associated with a material, physical, human nature. It must have only seemed that way.

The opposite heresy, Ebionitism, came from an early Jewish cult, which followed Jesus but could not accept His divinity, perhaps because of a perceived conflict with their monotheism. This position was very much a minority view until the time of Arius, but he developed it into a much more sophisticated argument and had many followers, both in his time and today.

In the early period, the simple affirmation of the New Testament--Jesus is Lord--responded effectively to both of these early heresies. It affirmed the humanity of Christ, for Jesus is His human name. It also affirmed His deity, for the Greek word translated Lord in 1 Corinthians 12:3 (*kyrios*) is the same word used to translate the most common title of God (Yahweh) in the Old Testament. Thus, it carried a clear claim to deity. But there was soon to be a need for a more thorough statement.

2. The Arian controversy. The controversy between Arius (250-336) and Athanasius (296-373) is a landmark in the development of Christology. The ideas first invented by Arius reappear again and again in cults down through history. His principle emphasis is the complete transcendence and absolute unity of God. God alone is Creator, and He is Creator of <u>all</u>. Everything else derives from God. There can be only one source. For Arius, the idea of the deity of Christ conflicts with the unity of God. Therefore, Christ must be regarded as a creature.

"There was a time when he was not" is the statement associated with the Arian view of Christ. The Son may be a perfect creature, different from all other creatures, similar to God, but subordinate to God. The titles used for Christ in the New Testament and the claims of His deity must be seen as metaphorical and honorific.

The major opponent of Arius was Athanasius. He advanced two key arguments for the necessity of affirming the full deity of Christ. His first argument is that salvation requires a fully divine Savior. Only God can break the power of sin, redeem lost creatures, and give eternal life. If Jesus Christ is only a creature, Athanasius argues, he cannot redeem humanity. Therefore, we must affirm the deity of Christ for salvation.

The second argument Athanasius makes is that Christians worship and pray to Jesus Christ. This had been common for the Christian church virtually since the beginning. If Jesus Christ is just a creature, and not God in the flesh, Christians for hundreds of years would have been guilty of idolatry. Thus, the Arian position made nonsense of the way Christians prayed and worshiped. In fact, Athanasius would argue, the way Christians prayed and worshiped revealed their instinctive knowledge that Jesus was, in fact, God incarnate.

This controversy raged in the late third and early fourth centuries. One key motivation for the calling of the Council of Nicaea was Constantine's desire to have this issue resolved. The debate came to center upon two words: *homoiousios* and *homoousios*. The former affirms that Christ is similar to God the Father; the second that Christ is fully equal to God the Father. The Council decided to affirm the full equality of Christ with God the Father and did so in the following words:

> We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance [*homoousios*] with the Father.

Despite the action of this Council in 325, the Arian controversy continued to rage through most of the fourth century. Several of the Roman emperors lent their support to Arius and his followers, and Athanasius, because of his own uncompromising opposition to Arianism, was forced into exile from his position as bishop of Alexandria five times during his life. Eventually, however, the Nicene formulation was reaffirmed at Constantinople in 381 and Arianism declined and became permanently regarded as heresy.

3. The schools of Alexandria and Antioch. These two cities had long been centers of theological thought, each having a school of theology associated with it. As on many other issues, these two schools differ slightly in how they develop the doctrine of the person of Christ. The Alexandrian school approached the doctrine of Christ's person through the issue of salvation. Their understanding of salvation is traditionally called deification. This is not understood as becoming gods, as Mormonism teaches, but as union with God or sharing the nature of God, as in 2 Peter 1:4. With this understanding of salvation, the Alexandrian school saw the incarnation as the assumption of human nature into the divine nature. In Christ, God became human in order that humans might become partakers of the divine nature.

This linking of the issue of salvation with the person of Christ was important in responding to the heresy raised by Apollonarius of Laodicea. Apollonarius came to be

concerned about the idea that the second person of the Trinity assumed human nature in its entirety. Would not the assumption of all of human nature contaminate Christ's deity and compromise the sinlessness of Christ? For this reason, Apollonarius argued that in Christ the human mind and soul were replaced by a divine mind and soul. Thus, Christ possessed a human body but no human mind or soul. His human nature is thus incomplete.

The Alexandrian school, however, saw disastrous soteriological implications in the view of Apollonarius. How could human nature be redeemed and taken into the divine nature if only part of human nature had been assumed by Christ? It was Gregory of Nazianzus who gave the most well-known response to Apollonarius. He said, "What has not been assumed has not been healed; it is what is united to his divinity that is saved." Thus, Christ must have a complete human nature in order to redeem all of human nature.

However, in their emphasis upon the union of the human nature with the divine nature, the Alexandrian school ran the danger of teaching the virtual dissolution of the human nature. They were hesitant to affirm that after the incarnation, Christ possessed two distinct natures, one human and one divine. The human nature was virtually absorbed into the divine nature. Some later theologians accused the Alexandrian school of confusing or mixing the two natures of Christ in an improper way. In fact, when the Council of Chalcedon affirmed two distinctive natures in Christ in union, some of the members of the Alexandrian school refused to accept it. They adopted a view called monophysitism, so called because they believed in only one (*mono*) nature in Christ (*physis*). Though contrary to the official formulation of the Council of Chalcedon, monophysitism remains represented today in the Coptic, Syrian, and Armenian churches.

The school of theology centered in Antioch developed a slightly different Christology, with different emphases. The difference in emphasis is due largely to a difference in their view of salvation. Whereas Alexandria had seen salvation as deification, the Antiochene school saw salvation in terms of obedience. Humanity owed obedience to God, but because of sin and corruption, humans were unable to render their obedience to God. Only God had sufficient power to break the bonds of sin and offer perfect obedience to God. Thus, the need is for a redeemer, both human and divine, to effect salvation.

In this Christology, the two natures of Christ are strongly defended. Christ must be both human, to render the obedience humans owe God, and divine to be able to offer that obedience. The school at Alexandria criticized those at Antioch for teaching what they thought was two sons: that Christ is two persons, one divine and one human. In response, those at Antioch charged the Alexandrian position with mingling or confusing the two natures in Christ. Whereas the Alexandrian school had seen the human nature as assumed by the divine nature, and virtually absorbed into the divine nature, the Antiochene school maintained the human and divine natures as watertight compartments, never interacting or mingling with one another. They remained distinct but are united in one person (*hypostasis*).

This emphasis on the distinctness of the two natures in Christ led to a misunderstanding of the Christology of Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople, and a somewhat extreme representative of the Antiochene school. Nestorius was accused of teaching that Christ was two persons because he refused to affirm the idea of *theotokos*. This idea affirms that Mary is in fact the mother of God (the God-bearer). This idea stemmed from a logical syllogism:

* Jesus Christ is God
* Mary gave birth to Jesus
* Therefore, Mary is the mother of God

Nestorius refused to affirm the syllogism because he thought it confused the two natures of Christ. He could affirm Mary as the bearer of the Christ or the bearer of humanity, but not as the bearer of the divine nature of Christ. His opponents charged him with too sharply separating the two natures of Christ, creating in effect two Christs. Though Nestorius was making a legitimate point, his theology was misunderstood, misrepresented, and condemned in his own time. The real reason for his condemnation seems to be an unwillingness to accept criticism of the *theotokos* idea, which was widely accepted in popular piety and in academic circles of the day, based largely on acceptance of the idea of the communication of attributes.

3. The Chalcedonian formulation. All this leads us to the formulation of Christology reached by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Because this formulation has been so influential and is still the classical formulation in Christology in the Christian church at large, it is worth citing at length.

> Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father as regards His Godhead, and at the same time as regards His manhood; like us in all respects apart from sin; as regards His Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the virgin, the Godbearer (*theotokos*); one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only Begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence (*hypostasis*), not as parted or separated into two persons but one and the same Son and Only Begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of Him, and our Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us and decreed of the fathers as handed down to us.

The essence of this formulation may be stated more succinctly as two full and complete natures united in one person. This formulation rules out all six of the heresies we had mentioned. Ebionitism and Arianism deny the reality or completeness of Jesus' deity. Docetism and Apolloniariantism deny the reality or completeness of Christ's humanity. Monophysitism fuses the two natures. Nestorianism too sharply divides the two natures and thus, at least in the opinion of some, denies the union of the two natures.

I believe the formulation of the Council of Chalcedon--two complete natures united in one person--is a good summary of biblical teaching regarding the person of Christ. It has set the boundaries for orthodox formulations of the person of Christ for the church for nearly 1500 years, and I believe deserves continued support in our day as well.

B. Christology Since the Enlightenment.

1. Schleiermacher and the appeal to experience. Though there were occasional eruptions of Arianism through the centuries, the Chalcedonian formulation of Christology was not seriously challenged until the Enlightenment. At that time, anti-supernaturalism became the assumption of much thought and thus the NT account of Jesus was doubted by many of the intelligentsia.

Friedrich Schleiermacher saw what was happening and turned to experience to give Christianity a new basis. In the area of Christology, he began with the experience of being redeemed. From this, we infer that Christ is our Redeemer. But redemption is seen as being lifted to a level of perfect God-consciousness. Christ is able to redeem us, in this sense, because He alone has perfect God-consciousness. In this scheme, traditional ideas of deity, miracles, atoning death and bodily resurrection are outside our experience, and thus irrelevant to Christology. With Schleiermacher, we begin classical liberal theology.

2. Three quests of the historical Jesus. Whereas Schleiermacher turned to experience, most of theology tried to separate the true historical Jesus from the legendary accretions added. It was assumed that the NT accounts cannot be historical because the supernatural cannot happen. With that assumption firmly in place, various theologians began to sift through the gospels, seeking to separate the kernel of true, historical reality from myth and legend.

All the time these historical quests were going on, there was another stream developing, in Gotthold Lessing, Schleiermacher, Martin Kahler and Bultmann, that despaired of finding anything meaningful in history and turned elsewhere (to philosophy, experience, faith, existentialism). We will look first at the attempts to find a meaningful Jesus through historical critical research.

a. The First Quest. We derive the quest phraseology from a famous book by Albert Schweitzer, written in 1906. In it, he chronicled the attempts of various theologians in the late 18th and throughout the 19th century to pierce through the veil of miracle and supernatural in Scripture to the real Jesus.

He notes the importance of D. F. Strauss, who wrote the first influential "Life of Jesus" that frankly stated his view that the gospels are riddled with myth: "religious ideas in historical clothing." But most of the Lives of Jesus of the 19th century reflect the writers more than Jesus, as Schweitzer recognized. Thus, for Ernst Renan, Jesus appears very much like a French peasant; for Adolf Harnack, Jesus has views very much like a 19th century German liberal Protestant. Schweitzer critiques all these views for not seeing Jesus in his historical context and missing the importance of eschatology in his life and preaching. This contribution of Schweitzer became very important to much christological discussion in the 20th century, with realized, futurist, and inaugurated eschatology schools offering differing interpretations of Jesus' eschatology. Schweitzer himself saw Jesus as preaching and expecting the immediate coming of the eschaton, and his death as a final attempt to force God's hand and bring in the eschaton. This famous quotation summarizes in a dramatic fashion his interpretation:

> There is silence all around. The Baptist appears and cries: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Soon after that comes Jesus, and in the knowledge that He is the coming Son of Man lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last

> revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn, and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign.

This is beautiful prose, but horrible theology. It completely misses the joy of Easter and leaves Jesus a noble, but tragic, and dead, figure.

The first quest began to lose steam at the end of the 19th century. In 1892, Martin Kahler published an important book, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ*. Like many others, he separated the Christ portrayed in the Bible from the real historical Jesus, but unlike his predecessors, he claimed that it was the Christ of faith that was important for Christian faith, not the Jesus of history. We can't really get at *historie*, and do not need to; what is important is *geschichte*, the interpretation of that history and its impact on the disciples. So it doesn't matter if Jesus really rose or not; what matters is has the Christ risen in your heart as he did in the hearts of the disciples?

Rudolf Bultmann continued and extended the ideas of Kahler. History is irrelevant, so it doesn't matter that the NT teaches many things that are historically inaccurate. The task of theology is to recognize the myths embodied in the NT, de-mythologize them and recast them in the terms of existential philosophy, which can be accepted by people of the modern world.

b. The New Quest. Bultmann's historical skepticism was viewed by many of his own students (as well as other theologians like Karl Barth) as needlessly extreme, leaving Christianity with no historical basis. In 1954, one of Bultmann's prize students, Ernst Kasemann, wrote an important article, calling for "A New Quest of the Historical Jesus." Some of these participants in this quest believed the historical/critical method could yield reliable historical information about the real Jesus. Joachim Jeremias, for example, believes we hear the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus in the gospels, if not the *ipsissima verba*. Wolfhart Pannenberg affirms the historical reality of the resurrection. But historical skepticism was still the dominant position in NT studies, and narrative theology can be seen as a way of avoiding the question of historicity by asking how events function in the narrative, rather than whether they actually happened.

c. While the New Quest was fading in European theology, a largely American effort has been termed by some the Third Quest. I refer to the Jesus Seminar, and its infamous attempt to vote on what Jesus actually said. As pointed out by William Craig in his lectures here in 1996, the destination of this "quest" was predetermined from the start, by a return to historical skepticism little less extreme than Bultmann's.

We reject the premise of the three quests, and that of those who say history is unimportant. We accept the NT records as historically accurate as they are, the accounts of miracles as factual, the historicity of them critical, and Jesus himself as both human and divine.

3. Contemporary Christologies. While there have been some relatively new Christologies in recent years (Tillich's view of Christ as the symbol of New Being who can overcome our estrangement from the Ground of Being, or liberation theology's view of Jesus as a

rebel and liberator from oppression and poverty), the most serious challenge in our time is from a revival of the ancient Arian heresy. It has been present in cults since the 19th century (chiefly Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses), but was affirmed from within classical Christianity by a group of Anglicans who wrote *The Myth of God Incarnate*.

These writers offer four critiques of the deity of Christ. They claim: (1) that the idea of a God-man is unintelligible, like that of a square circle; (2) that only John and Paul really teach the deity of Christ, and that the early councils were unduly influenced by Greek philosophy; (3) that a divine Christ leads to an exclusivist Christianity, and, as pluralists, they are unwilling to devalue other world religions and regard Christianity as unique; and (4) the deity of Christ is inessential--all that is valuable in Christianity can be retained without it.

Fortunately, these objections are fairly easy to answer. To the first objection, we may reply that the analogy is inappropriate, for we know what a circle is and what a square, but how can we define a priori what is and is not possible for deity. In fact, Thomas V. Morris, an evangelical teaching at Notre Dame, has written a book entitled *The Logic of God Incarnate* that deals conclusively with this objection.

The second objection is extremely weak. We will show soon evidence for the deity of Christ in every strand of the NT, and even if only Paul and John taught the deity of Christ, that would be more than sufficient.

We must agree with the reasoning behind the third objection. A divine Christ does lead to an exclusivistic Christianity, but whereas they drop the deity of Christ, we reject pluralism. We need not view all other world religions as totally worthless, but as incomplete and lacking in salvific power apart from Christ.

The fourth objection reveals their truncated idea of Christianity. The deity of Christ is linked to the doctrine of the Trinity. It offers at least a partial response to the problem of evil, showing that God has not isolated himself from the pain of the world. It is the indispensable basis for the atonement, as Anselm saw long ago (*Cur Deus Homo*?). A less than divine Christ would produce a less than orthodox Christianity.

III. Theological Formulation. In this context, where the classical Christology of Chalcedon has been questioned or abandoned outside of evangelical circles, how should we shape our theological formulation of the doctrine of Christ? What points call for special emphasis and/or defense?

A. Defending the Deity of Christ. We straightforwardly reject the historical skepticism that has dominated much of theological thought since the Enlightenment and accept the NT portrait of Christ. And in that portrait, we find evidence for the deity of Christ pervasive throughout. We offer four lines of evidence:

1. Direct claims. Verses like John 1:1, 1:18, 10:30, 17:3, 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15, 2:2; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; James 1:1; II Pet. 1:11; I John 5:20; and Rev. 12:10 make a fairly direct claim to deity for Jesus. Even more impressive, in my opinion, are the indirect claims that come out in a variety of ways.

2. Divine titles. Beyond the direct description of Jesus as God, several of the titles used by and for Jesus also imply deity. "Lord" (*kyrios*) is the usual LXX translation for Yahweh, and while the Greek word could be used for humans, for Jews steeped in the OT it had to have something of a divine connotation, when combined with all the other evidence.

"Son of God" was seldom used by Jesus of himself, but it is affirmed at many key moments of his earthly life: his birth (Lk. 1:35), baptism (Mk. 1:11), confession by Peter (Matt. 16:16), and transfiguration (Mk. 9:7). The Jews of Jesus' day correctly deduced that this involved a claim to equality with God (John 5:18, 10:30).

Jesus' favorite self-designation, Son of Man, was used because it announced his deity and messiahship (via linkage with Dan. 7:13, especially as interpreted in his day), but did so in a veiled way, free of the political ideas often associated with the Messiah in Judaism.

3. Divine prerogatives. Jesus taught with authority (Matt. 7:28-29), forgave sin (Mk. 2:5-10), claimed Lordship over the Sabbath (Mk. 2:28), and received worship (Mt. 14:33, 28:9, Jn. 20:28), prerogatives that belong to God alone.

4. Divine works. The miracles Jesus performed testify to His deity (John 10:24-25). He is identified as Creator (Jn. 1:3, Col. 1:16) and Sustainer (Heb. 1:3, Col. 1:17). All judgment has been entrusted to him (Jn. 5:22-23).

These lines of evidence are especially strong in John and Paul, but come from throughout the NT, and provide overwhelming evidence for Christ's deity.

B. The Historicity of the Cross and Resurrection. More than any other, Christianity is a historical religion. The center of our faith is not a system of ethics, or the performance of rituals, or even elevated moral and spiritual teaching. The heart and soul of Christianity rests on the reality of two events: the atoning work of the cross and its vindication in the empty tomb. Furthermore, the second provides the strongest apologetic argument for Christianity.

We may acknowledge with Lessing that these events do not constitute an airtight, philosophically impeccable proof; we do not need such a proof. They do constitute, however, an important attestation of Christ, on the basis of which we may call for a faith response to him.

C. The Uniqueness of Christ. Increasingly, we will feel pressure from a pluralistic society and world to drop the exclusivity of Christianity. The strongest defense of that claim lies in the uniqueness of Christ. This claim, in turn, rests upon the deity of Christ, and his atoning death and victorious resurrection. Christ is the only way because only Christ is able to make the way.

IV. Practical Applications. Actually, almost everything in the Christian life can be seen as a response to the person and work of Christ, but I would like to offer specific practical applications on three levels.

A. For the Believer. If you want to summarize the meaning of the doctrine of Christ for the individual believer, I think the best single word is **identification**. The incarnation was the greatest act of identification the world has ever known, and is still the best model for evangelism

and missions. We can know that he really knows our life, our pain, our frustrations and problems. On the cross, he identified himself with us so completely that he became our sin (II Cor. 5:21), so that we could become the righteousness of God in him. John Stott has said, "I could not believe in God if the cross did not exist. In this world of pain, how could we worship a God who was immune to pain?" But on the cross, God opened himself and took our pain in to himself. Even in his ascended, exalted state, Jesus continues to identify with us. He has brought his glorified humanity within the Trinity, and he still feels the sufferings of his body on earth (Acts 9:4: "why do you persecute me?"). He is Immanuel, God present with us.

B. For the Church. The center of the church's faith is the person of Christ. In Christian history, there have been two central seasons in the Christian liturgical year: Advent, leading up to Christmas, and Lent, leading up to Easter. Baptists have traditionally ignored the liturgical calendar, but we would be foolish to overlook the obvious teaching opportunity afforded us by these two seasons. Christmas opens up to us the wonder of the person of Christ, and Easter brings us to consider the work of Christ. It is a foolish church that does not make much of these seasons to teach the central truths of the faith.

As well, the seasons give us the chance to develop certain attitudes essential to the Christian life. The season of Advent allows us to experience the joy and sense of expectancy that should also characterize our lives as we look forward to Christ's second advent. And the Catholic practice of denying oneself something for the season of Lent also has value in enabling us to practice self-denial, develop self-discipline and identify in a small way with the sufferings of Christ.

C. For the World. Because Jesus is worthy of the adoration of every heart that beats, we cannot stop preaching the gospel until every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus is Lord. The strongest motivation for evangelism (and the most prominent in the NT) is not the lost condition of humanity, but the worthiness and glory of Christ.

Secondarily, because Jesus loves the world, and we love Jesus, we must love those he loves. He was moved with compassion when he looked out on the world (Matt. 9:36); his followers should be filled with Christlike compassion when we look out upon the world today.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY II
UNIT 2: THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST
PART B: THE WORK OF CHRIST
OUTLINE

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CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY II
UNIT 2: THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST
PART B: THE WORK OF CHRIST

Systematic theologians often feel about doctrines like parents feel about their children: you can't really put one above the others. And in fact all the doctrines of the Christian faith are vitally important and intricately inter-related and interdependent. But if I had to narrow it down to three doctrines that are most important to me, I would give the doctrines of revelation, the church, and salvation.

Revelation is necessary to make theology and any valid knowledge of God possible. My beliefs about the church are why I am a Baptist and guide my convictions about priorities in ministry. But salvation is what God has done to reclaim us from condemnation and fit us for eternal bliss, and so must be the centerpiece of theology. And it is the work of Christ that provides salvation. That is why we call him Savior; it is why he was born (Matt. 1:21).

Since the time of Calvin, it has been common to speak of Christ's work in terms of his triple office: prophet, priest, and king. As prophet, He is the one who alone has the words of life (John 6:68); He is the one who teaches with a singular, divine authority (Matt. 7:28-29). His very being revealed God's nature (John 14:9).

As king, we speak of Jesus' true nature and power, veiled for most of his earthly life. Yet the center of his proclamation was the kingdom of God, for in Him the kingdom had drawn near. His miracles showed His kingly authority over sickness, nature, demons, even death. But the fullness of the kingdom awaits His second advent, which we will examine later.

Our focal point in the study of Christ's work will be His priestly work of atonement, in which He is both priest and sacrifice. He represents God before humanity, revealing both the depth of the divine love and the blazing holiness of God. He also represents humanity before God, bearing our sins into God's presence and receiving the judgment of God upon them in his own body on the cross.

Our familiarity with the cross dulls us to its shocking and strange nature. What other religion celebrates and studies in detail the death of its founder? The explanation is that this death is like no other death in history. In Christ, the eternal immortal God, the source of all life, tasted death. And if that is so, then it is not surprising that His death carries enormous, eternal consequences.

I. Biblical Foundations.

A. Seven Key Terms. The work of the cross is so extensive and multi-faceted that Scripture uses a variety of terms and images to convey its meaning.

1. Obedience. Calvin gives primacy to this word as the most all inclusive word to describe the redeeming work of Christ (Rom. 5:19). He came from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of the Father (John 6:38); his brothers and sisters are those who do the will of

the Father (Matt. 12:50); and he could claim to always have done that which pleased the Father (John 8:29), living a sinless life (Heb. 4:15).

This does not mean that obedience came easy to Christ. In his identification with us, he had to learn obedience through suffering (Heb. 5:8). Both the suffering and the obedience reached their apex as he approached the cross. His anguished prayer of submission to the Father's will in the garden involved obedience in the face of suffering that we can scarcely comprehend. And death was a matter of obedience only to Christ (Phil. 2:8). We die by necessity; only Christ chose to be obedient to the point of death.

In relationship to the atonement, obedience is both a necessary prerequisite and a summary description. Had he not been perfectly obedient in his earthly life, he would have had to die for his own sins, and could not have died in our place. But because he lived in perfect obedience, he is able to impute his perfect righteousness to us (Phil. 3:9). This is usually called by theologians his "active obedience."

Death was obedience in that he allowed it to happen; he chose to endure the suffering, rather than call on His Father (Matt. 26:53) or exercise his own omnipotence. This is termed the passive obedience of Christ.

Because of his obedience, he can provide what we need: pardon for our sins and perfect righteousness. Normally, we think about Christ's death in association with the atonement, and we should, for the cross is the center. But we cannot omit consideration of his perfectly obedient life, for apart from that perfect obedience, he could not be our substitute and sin-bearer, and the source of righteousness and salvation (Heb. 5:9).

2. Sacrifice. One of the principal themes of Scripture is that of sacrifice, especially in the Pentateuch. The modern reader may find the detailed instructions about sacrifices boring, gory, and irrelevant, but God was preparing his people to understand the meaning of the Messiah's death. Jesus is recognized as the fulfillment of all the OT sacrificial system prefigured. John, Paul, and Peter all refer to him as the Lamb of God (John 1:29, I Cor. 5:6-8, I Pet. 1:18-19), and the book of Hebrews clearly sees Jesus as the fulfillment of both the sacrifices and priesthood (Heb. 9:11-14).

This theme supports traditional evangelical descriptions of the atonement as "substitutionary" and "penal." While the word "sacrifice" does not necessarily carry a substitutionary meaning (see, for example, Rom. 12:1, where "sacrifice" means simply "devotion"), as it is portrayed in the OT it often has that sense. The one seeking forgiveness placed his hands on the animal to be sacrificed, symbolizing the transference of guilt from the person to the animal (see Lev. 1:4, which is typical OT usage). This persistent practice is the background for prophecies like Isaiah 53:4-6 and NT teaching as a whole. The scapegoat of Lev. 16:20-22 is the background for the One who carries away our sin (I Pet. 2:24).

The support for the idea that atonement involves the payment of a penalty for sin (penal atonement) can be seen in what happened to the animals sacrificed. They were slaughtered; their blood (the symbol for life in the OT) was poured out. And it was the pouring out of life that made atonement (Lev. 17:11). Though much of modern theology has ridiculed the idea that God

requires death as the penalty of sin, the clear teaching of the NT is that "the wages of sin is death," and the pouring out of the blood of sacrificed animals is difficult to explain apart from the idea that the animal was not only the substitute for the sinner, but was paying the penalty due to the sinner for his sin.

To atone for our sins, it was not enough for Jesus to suffer a little; he had to die, for that is the penalty we place ourselves under when we sin. Suggestions that Christ died just to show the greatness of God's love do not make sense; dying for us is a mark of love only because it would have been our fate apart from his taking our place. If the point was simply to show God's love, other ways might have sufficed. For atoning for sin, death was necessary. The whole sacrificial system taught that.

3. Propitiation. The word in question here is variously translated: "propitiation" is not very popular (NASB); "expiation" is more common (RSV); "atoning sacrifice" is NIV's attempt; "sacrifice to take away sins" is the most recent attempt (NLT). What is this word and what is the reason for these variations?

a. The Problem With Propitiation. Actually, there is a group of words involved, all related to the Greek verb *hilaskomai.* It is found in only one theologically significant text (Heb. 2:17). The noun *hilasmos* occurs twice (I John 2:2, 4:10), and a related word, *hilasterion,* occurs in a very important text, Rom. 3:25. It is these four texts that are involved in this debate. Despite the paucity of verses, this word group is central to an understanding of the atonement, for reasons which we shall soon explain.

The reasons for the variations in translations have to do with the history of the idea behind this word group. In secular Greek, these words were always used with the idea of placating or appeasing the capricious gods of Greek religion. Propitiation came to take on a somewhat negative connotation. Furthermore, the God of the NT is nothing like those gods, and some scholars, especially C. H. Dodd, flatly believe that to think God needs to be propitiated is to think unworthy thoughts of God. He advocated translating the words involved as "expiation," which involves the idea of erasing or covering sin, but not appeasing a person. Part and parcel of this view is Dodd's conviction that wrath is not a quality or attribute of God, but simply is used in Scripture to denote impersonal retribution, the idea that when one sins, bad things happen. It does not signify that God is somehow angry, it is just the way the world is.

While Dodd has been a very important and influential scholar, his work on this word group has been challenged and surpassed by that of Leon Morris (*The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*). While Morris agrees that the God of Scripture is nothing like pagan gods, he argues that God's wrath is aroused by sin and that it is the satisfaction of that wrath that is in view when the *hilaskomai* word group is used.

b. Propitiation in the Septuagint. To substantiate his position, he begins by examining the Septuagint, for in that version of the OT, the *hilaskomai* word group is widely used, with the verb *exhilaskomai* used as the normal translation for the Hebrew word *kipper* (83 times), which is usually translated "atonement" in English (thus, Yom Kippur is day of

atonement). Thus this word group is central to the biblical understanding of what the atonement involves.

Morris's conclusions can be simply stated: in the OT, atonement (*kipper*) involved the payment of a ransom (*kopher*) which turned aside divine wrath which would otherwise fall. In Exod. 30:12-16, a half-shekel ransom must be paid for every adult male counted in a census; otherwise, plagues, expressive of the divine wrath, would fall. In Exod. 32:30-32, Moses recognizes that his people lay under the wrath of God, and offers himself as a substitute for them. In Num. 25:10-13, Phineas made atonement by destroying two of those involved in sin. This passage is especially clear that God was angry at the sin of his people; that his anger was turned aside or satisfied by means of an atonement, and that he accepted the atonement in place of the people. Thus Morris demonstrates (conclusively, in the judgment of most scholars), that satisfaction of God's righteous and holy wrath by means of an acceptable substitute is involved in the OT idea of atonement.

Presumably, since the same word group used in the Septuagint is involved in the NT, an examination of the NT verses would yield the same results: that atonement involves satisfaction of divine wrath by means of substitution. Does exegetical examination validate that presumption?

c. Propitiation in the NT. Rom. 3:25 supports that conclusion, for in that text, it is Christ's death that allows God to justly justify sinners. Chapters 1-3 of Romans have demonstrated that all of humanity is under the righteous wrath of God (see Rom. 1:18 and Paul's conclusion in 3:19-20). But now the wrath is averted (satisfied) by the work of the Son, shedding his blood in the place of sinners.

The OT background of the book of Hebrews implies that the usage of *hilaskomai* in Heb. 2:17 would be consistent with OT usage, and the mention of our need for a "merciful High Priest" implies that we are unworthy. Thus our need to escape the wrath of God may be implied in this verse. And as the rest of the book of Hebrews makes clear, the sacrifice Jesus offers as High Priest is his own blood (Heb. 9:12).

The two uses of *hilasmos* in I John do nothing to change our view. In fact, our need for an Advocate in I John 2:1 implies that we are under the wrath of God. Our advocate pleads our case by making an offering that turns aside wrath, and that offering is the Advocate himself, our substitute.

Morris's conclusion is affirmed by John Stott, Paige Patterson, and J. I. Packer. They all agree that the traditional Protestant and Reformation view of penal, substitutionary atonement finds strong support in the *hilaskomai* word group, in both the Old and New Testaments.

It remains to be observed that the charge of Dodd and others that the idea of propitiation is unworthy of God is not only erroneous, but misses how the biblical description of propitiation exalts God. For the very offering that God demands He also provides. In Lev. 17:11, he terms the blood offering he prescribes as his gift to them; it is his appointed means of making

atonement. The graciousness of God in providing propitiation is most underscored in I John 4:10, where the propitiation that satisfies God's wrath flows from God's love, showing once again that the cross is the ultimate revelation and resolution of both God's love and God's wrath. Far from contradicting the love of God, propitiation highlights it as holy love.

4. Reconciliation. At first sight, the word reconciliation (*katalasso*) might not appear an important term for the work of Christ on the cross, for it appears in only four passages in the NT (Rom. 5:10-11, II Cor. 5:18-20, Eph. 2:11-16, Col. 1:19-22). But it is intimately connected with the idea of peace, which is a central blessing of the gospel (Paul's standard greeting: "grace and peace to you"), and signifies the end of hostility and enmity, which links it with another significant group of words (hostile, enmity, enemies). Thus, it is justly regarded as one of the central ideas for the work of Christ.

a. The meaning of reconciliation. There is a measure of agreement on the basic meaning of reconciliation. The root of the Greek word means to change or exchange, and the idea that developed around the form of the word used in the NT is clearly to exchange enmity for friendship. Thus, Today's English Version of "Be reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:20) is "let God change you from enemies into his friends!"

The question debated among some NT scholars is the direction of the reconciliation. Some have claimed that God has never been hostile toward sinners, and that reconciliation means only the ending of the sinner's hostility toward God. They note that the passages that use the word reconciliation focus on the idea of humans being reconciled to God, not vice versa. (As we shall discuss later, they prefer a subjective understanding of the atonement, as opposed to an objective understanding).

But, like the attempts to translate the *hilaskomai* word group as expiation, this attempt is based on a denial of the wrath of God and an underestimation of the holiness of God. Again, Morris's treatment in *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* gives ample refutation, as does any thorough reading of the Bible.

The whole presupposition of the forty years in the wilderness, the judgment of Israel and then Judah is that God's holiness collides with human sin and causes a disruption of friendship. Rom. 5:9 links being saved from God's wrath with reconciliation, and the emphasis on making peace in Eph. 2 and Col. 1 assumes that there was hostility and warfare prior to the reconciliation. But most humans are not in fact consciously at enmity with God; it is God who regards the situation as hostile and takes offense at human sin.

As with propitiation, so too reconciliation is not at all contrary to the love of God, but a reflection of it. Morris cites a commentator who states "the more a father loves his son, the more he hates in him the drunkard, the liar, and the traitor" (p. 197).

Cranfield's commentary on Romans 5:9-10 states what I see as the correct interpretation succinctly: "The enmity which is removed in the act of reconciliation is both sinful man's hostility to God . . . and also God's hostility to sinful man" (vol. 1, p. 267).

b. The initiative in reconciliation. We should note that in all four passages the initiative for reconciliation comes from the divine side, again showing the coexistence of love and holiness. The holy enmity called forth by human sin is matched by a holy love that offers a way to resolve the enmity.

At the same time, it is also clear that reconciliation does not take place automatically, independent of response. The call of II Cor. 5:20 shows the necessity of response, of receiving and living in the good of what Christ has accomplished. The statement of reconciliation in Col. 1:19-22 has been accused of having universalistic overtones, but Col. 1:23 clarifies the requirement of continuance in the faith.

c. The means of reconciliation. It is clear in all four key passages that it is the work of Christ on the cross that brings reconciliation. In Eph. and Col. there is an especially strong emphasis on what happened in and through Christ's physical, fleshly body. It was in his bearing of sin, and absorption of hostility, that reconciliation was accomplished. Cranfield's comment on Rom. 5 is worth quoting at length:

> Christ's death was the means by which God pardoned us without in any way condoning our sin and so laid aside His hostility towards us in a way that was worthy of His goodness and love and consistent with His constant purpose of mercy for us, and on the other hand, it was the means by which He demonstrated His love for us and so broke our hostility toward Himself. (pp. 267-268)

d. The results of reconciliation. One's view of the results of reconciliation differs with one's interpretation of the problem to which it was addressed.

If the need was simply to demonstrate such love that humans would cease their hostility, then Christ's death must be seen in that light. But it is difficult to see how Christ's death can be a demonstration of God's love if it was not in fact necessary. The whole tenor of the passages on reconciliation cries out the fact that the death of Christ has an effect on something more than human feelings. There is an objective change in the divine-human relationship by that death. The just sentence of condemnation that hung over our heads, the wrath that burned toward our sin, the hostility of God toward the evil in us--these were the problems addressed by Christ's reconciling work, and the result of that work is an objective change in the context of our relationship with God. Now there can be peace (Eph. 2:14-17), with all the richness and well-being implied in the Hebrew concept of *shalom*, for the cause of enmity has been dealt with decisively.

While the focus of reconciliation is on the breaking of hostility between God and humans, it should also be noted that reconciliation also is said to affect the hostility among differing groups of humanity. Part of the peace that is brought in Eph. 2 is peace between Jew and Gentile. Formerly, the Gentiles had been excluded (2:12), but now all are reconciled by the same Lord, whose purpose was and is "to create in himself one new man out of the two" (2:15).

The application to 21st century America is obvious. Racial reconciliation is imperative, for if Christ has made us one, how can we live any longer as enemies?

The peace-making even extends to the creation, whose relationship to humanity had been disrupted by the fall. Col. 1:20 emphasizes that reconciliation extends to include "all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven." Does this phrase simply refer to the whole physical universe (the heavens and the earth), or does the cross affect God's relationship with angelic beings? Hebrews 2:16 and the fixed status of both the holy and fallen angels seems to point to the first interpretation.

As to the extent of the healing of the disruption that occurred between humans and the physical creation that has been achieved by the reconciliation, I think we must be cautious. Rom. 8:19-21 emphasizes that the marks of fallenness still remain upon the creation until the eschaton and the final, full restoration. And there seems to be no observable difference in the physical creation before and after the cross. Perhaps the best way to interpret the reconciliation of "all things" is to look at it from God's point of view. God is now free to renew and restore His creation, though stained by human sin, because of the reconciling power of the cross. That He chooses to delay implementation of the restoration until the eschaton is part and parcel of the already/not yet tension of this present age.

5. Redemption. This idea involves a number of words related to the Greek word *lutron* (ransom, redeem, redeemer), six verses in which Christians are said to be bought (*agorazo*) and two further verses in which the word for redeem is *exagorazo* (Gal. 3:13, 4:4). In all of Scripture, the idea of redemption appears more than 150 times, more than a score of those times very direct NT references to the cross, including the most explicit statement about the cross that we have from the mouth of Jesus himself (Mk. 10:45, Matt. 20:28).

The basic idea behind the *lutron* word group is the same for the Septuagint, secular Greek, and the NT: someone (or at times, something) enslaved is liberated by the payment of a price, usually called a ransom.

The OT uses this idea in a variety of contexts. Lev. 25:25 gives a very literal example of buying back a piece of property that had been sold. Of course, the greatest OT act of redemption was the Exodus (Exod. 6:6). His people were enslaved; He freed them at the expense of the exercise of His power; as a result, the redeemed are His people. Isaiah has a special emphasis on the Lord as the Holy Redeemer of Israel (see Is. 41:14, 43:14; 13 times in all), and the idea of the kinsman-redeemer (see Ruth 4) is a beautiful foreshadowing of the Messiah.

There are a few places in the Psalms where the idea of spiritual redemption is raised (see Ps. 49:5-9, 15, Ps. 130:7-8). Despite the deliberate lack of clarity given to OT writers on the topic of life beyond the grave (II Tim. 1:10 says that was reserved for Jesus to bring to light), there is the confidence that the Lord himself will redeem His people from death and corruption.

In secular Greek, the idea of redemption was very commonly used in the slave markets, when a slave's freedom was bought. There are numerous examples in manuscripts from the time

of such usage. One scholar who has immersed himself in such studies, Adolf Deissman, says that a person of that epoch could not have heard the words redeem, redemption, ransom, and not think of a slave being liberated.

In the NT, the statement of Jesus that he came to give his life as "a ransom for many" (*lutron anti pollon,* Mk. 10:45, Mt. 20:28) has been the subject of much study, for it is the most explicit statement Jesus makes about the meaning of his death. Each word in this phrase has importance. The meaning of *lutron* we have already discussed, but have not yet underlined the strong substitutionary idea involved. The ransom price served as a substitute for the one freed, and this concept is strengthened by the preposition used: *anti,* which normally means "in exchange for" or "instead of." Finally, the word *pollon* is seen by many scholars as a clear clue to the fact that Jesus thought of himself in terms of the Suffering Servant of Is. 53, who would justify and bear the sin of "many" (see Is. 53:11-12). I Tim. 2:6 justifies the interpretation of "many" in the Hebrew sense of a general term for an unspecified large number, not necessarily implying a limitation.

Redemption terminology is scattered throughout Paul's letters (see Rom. 3:24, Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14), including an unusual use in Gal. 3:13, where both the penal and substitutionary ideas of the atonement are strong. The idea of redemption is also mentioned by Peter (I Pet. 1:18), Luke (Lk. 2:38, 24:21), the author of Hebrews (Heb. 9:12), and John (Rev. 5:9), making it pervasive throughout the NT.

Morris (*The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*) summarizes the importance of the image of redemption for the cross by highlighting three central ideas it involves:

a. The state out of which we must be redeemed. As the subjects of redemption, we are seen as helplessly enslaved, having no resources with which to free ourselves. We are under the dominion of sin and Satan (Rom. 7:14, Heb. 9:15), under the curse pronounced by the law on those who break the law (Gal. 3:10).

b. The high price of redemption. This is the point most emphasized in the NT. Redemption cost Jesus his life (Mk. 10:45); it required the precious blood of a spotless Lamb (I Pet. 1:18-19). Remember the insightful words of Psalm 49:8: "the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough." An infinite price was paid. To create the world, God simply spoke a word. To redeem the world, He gave His final Word, the living, Incarnate Word.

c. Redemption involves the idea of substitution. And because the price given as a substitute is accepted, there can be no further claim on the redeemed. He is free.

A question that the NT never answers is "who receives the payment?" Some of the early church fathers answered "Satan." But soon others realized that Satan does not possess us, nor does he have the right to be paid for what God created and owns. A more likely answer is that God receives the payment himself, for it is His own just nature that He is satisfying. In any case, as with all scriptural metaphors, it can become dangerous if pushed too far. There is a difference between scriptural metaphors and images and full-fledged allegories.

Nevertheless, the early fathers did have a point. The death of Christ does have an effect on how we stand before Satan. Heb. 2:14 describes Satan as the one "who holds the power of death." I do not think this can mean Satan decides when we will die; rather, the power of death here is its power to enslave us to fear it (Heb. 2:15). Satan can use the power of death to terrorize us, accuse us, threaten us with the truth that we deserve both physical and spiritual death. But by his death, Christ destroys that power. As I Cor. 15 says, he removed the sting from death and thus disarmed the one seeking to use that power to enslave us. Thus, by his death Christ frees us from the fear of death (see the justly famous book by John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*).

6. Victory. The work of Christ is seen as a victory over all of the forces of evil: over Satan (John 12:31), over death and sin (I Cor. 15:55-56); over the powers and authorities (Col. 2:15).

This opens the way for us to consider the phrase added to the Apostles' Creed, that Christ "descended into hell," often interpreted as occurring between his death and resurrection.

Catholic theology saw the purpose of his descent as freeing the saved of the OT, who had been in a kind of halfway house, variously viewed as "paradise," or a nicer compartment of *hades* or *sheol* (the *limbus patrum*). Whatever word is used to describe it, it held the saved of the OT, and part of Christ's victory involved their liberation.

Calvin accepted the creedal formulation, but interpreted it as an actual descent into hell, where he actually suffered the agonies we deserved, based on Acts 2:24. Other interpretations were that Christ went to offer a post-mortem second chance opportunity to respond to the gospel, perhaps for those who lived in the OT and/or those who never heard the gospel. Most frequent among more recent evangelicals has been the idea that Christ proclaimed his victory in hell. The key verses in this issue are Eph. 4:8-9 and I Pet. 3:18-22.

Eph. 4:8-9 is relatively easy to understand and interpret. The descent to the lower regions in v. 9 is simply the incarnation. This is the view offered by John Stott in his commentary on Ephesians, and I think it is becoming increasingly accepted.

The second passage, I Pet. 3:18-22, is one of the most notoriously difficult NT passages to interpret. However, I think R. T. France (in *New Testament Interpretation*, pp. 264-279, ed. by R. Martin) gives a model of exegetical practice in his study of these verses. He begins by noting that our interpretation must be relevant to a church under persecution, for that was the situation Peter was addressing. Also, very importantly, he notes the importance of understanding the background of the first readers. Thus, he says, "To try to understand I Pet. 3:19-20 without a copy of the Book of Enoch at your elbow is to condemn yourself to failure" (p. 265). Let me highlight some of the important aspects of his interpretation.

As to the phrase "put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit" he sees this as a reference to two levels of life. On the physical plane, Jesus died on the cross. But by the power

of the Spirit, he lives a resurrected life, life on a new level and dimension. The idea that this refers to a spiritual existence between the time of his death and resurrection is neither necessary nor useful. It makes no sense, and leads to convoluted interpretations. By contrast, France's view gives encouragement to a believer facing possible martyrdom--by the power of the Spirit, Jesus has conquered death!

As the resurrected Lord, then, Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison. Note that this interpretation doesn't give a time frame, nor the location of the prison, for the text doesn't. But the time must be after the resurrection, and the place is not hell or *hades,* for "prison" is never used for either of those places in the NT.

The "spirits in prison" should be understood as fallen angels, for that is the most common translation of the particular Greek phrase used in v. 19. This is confirmed by the linkage to the disobedience of the spirits in the days of Noah, for the book of Enoch and Jewish mythology in general connected fallen angels with the sin of the "sons of God" in Gen. 6, which is the event immediately preceding the story of Noah and the flood. II Pet. 2:4-5 also puts the angels who sinned and have been cast into prison in the context of Noah's day.

The word for preaching here is *kerusso,* which usually means preaching the gospel, but can mean simply proclaiming (unlike *evanggelizo*). Here, there are sufficient contextual reasons for seeing the proclamation as referring to a proclamation of his victory, rather than an offer of the gospel. The angels in prison are awaiting judgment, not salvation; Peter's conclusion in v. 22 fits better with the idea of a proclamation of victory; and Peter's readers would be encouraged in the midst of persecution by being reminded that they follow a Lord enthroned by God over all powers of evil.

While there are further exegetical difficulties in vv. 20-21, the major point is now clear. This passage does not teach any descent by Christ into *hades,* but focuses on his ascension and victory over "angels, authorities and powers," a message of encouragement for Peter's day and ours. Jesus is the Victor! Do not fear! Verses like this passage and Col. 2:15 form the basis for what is called the classical theory of the atonement, which we shall examine shortly.

7. The final term used in Scripture for the atonement is example. I Pet. 2:21 and I John 3:16 clearly affirm the idea that at least one purpose of the atonement is as the supreme example of self-giving love. Clearly, this is not the central idea of the atonement. Our death cannot atone, redeem, reconcile as Christ's did. But we should have the same love, the same willingness to suffer and sacrifice for the good of another.

Seen in this light, the old Catholic practice of denying oneself something during Lent can be useful, if done to identify more closely with Christ, who calls all his followers to deny themselves, and take up their crosses and follow him.

B. Four Questions about the Atonement. These seven key biblical terms help us answer the most important question about the atonement: what is it? what did Christ accomplish on the

cross? But there are other aspects of the atonement that have also given rise to questions we need to consider.

1. The necessity of the atonement. The question here may be put in two ways. The first is: could God have really allowed us all to go to hell, or was there something within His nature that required Him to make a way of salvation? While any answer is somewhat speculative, the biblical association of grace with salvation leads me to deny the absolute necessity of the atonement. It was more than what anyone could have expected or asked, far more than justice demanded. The blessings we enjoy during life alone would be enough to show that God is loving as well as holy, but love that would go to death to redeem lost creatures is more than we could have expected, even from a God of infinite love.

The second form of the question is: given God's decision to save some, could he have provided salvation through some other way? Augustine and Aquinas answered yes, the Reformers didn't respond, and later Protestants thought no. The anguished prayer of Jesus in the garden seems to indicate that the death of the Son was the only way possible, Heb. 2:17 points to the necessity of a divine-human Savior (as Anselm saw), and Heb. 9:22 implies that a method that involved blood-shedding was requisite. At the very least, it was an extremely appropriate method, and was the method divine wisdom chose.

In recent years, some in the emerging church have raised questions, charging that a theology that says “somebody’s gotta die,” doesn’t sufficiently reflect God’s love, but others even within that movement have recognized the problems with that objection. In the first place, it is God’s love that provided atonement, but it is also God’s holiness that pronounced death as the penalty of sin, from the garden of Eden onward (Gen. 2:17; Ezek. 18:31-32; Rom. 6:23).

2. The finality of the atonement. The question here is the lasting power of the atonement. Jesus died nearly 2000 years ago; is it still efficacious today, or should we seek another source? The answer of Heb. 7:27, 9:12, 9:26, and 10:10 is that Jesus died "once and for all" (*ephapax*). There is no need to add to it, repeat it, or supplement it. This reveals the heart of Christianity as a historical religion, where certain events at a specific time and place, have eternal significance, and stands as an objection to the idea of the Mass as a repetition or reenactment of the sacrifice of Christ. That single, historical act was enough.

3. The sufficiency of the atonement. The question here is: do we have any part in paying for our sins, or did Jesus really pay it all? We add this to respond to the idea of some Catholics that while the death of Christ liberates us from the eternal consequences of sin, we still have to purge ourselves from some of the temporal consequences of sin, through penance and purgatory.

We respond that Titus 2:14 says we have already been redeemed from all wickedness and that Christ gave himself to purify us; that Heb. 1:3 says Christ provided purification for sins and sat down, indicating that the process is completed; that I John 1:7 says the blood of Christ purifies us from all sin. There can be no further purging of sin; Jesus paid it all.

The attraction of penance or punishing oneself for sin is that we think we somehow can force God to forgive us, if we've suffered enough. But God wants us to live sheerly by grace. He doesn't want the small sacrifices we make from guilt and fear, but the glad surrender of our lives that comes as our response to grace.

To be sure, the Bible speaks of an ongoing need to purify our hearts and lives, but clearly the reference is to the process of sanctification that continues throughout this life, and not to something that continues after death, for the promise of I John 3:2 and Rom. 8:30 is that our final and complete glorification comes at Christ's return and is produced by God ("those He justified, these He also glorified").

We conclude, then, that the death of Christ covers all sins equally, and that there is no need or possibility of adding to his atoning work. We do not deny that there are some temporal consequences we bear due to sin, but bearing those consequences is not to be regarded as especially meritorious nor atoning, but as part of God's discipline in our lives.

Among Baptists and other evangelicals, we sometimes seem to regard Christ's death as sufficient for sins committed before conversion, but regard sins committed after conversion as somehow more serious and less forgiven. We say of someone with a horrible past, "They're a new creature now, and all those sins are under the blood." Does this imply that sins committed after conversion are less forgiven? The atonement is sufficient to cover all our sins. We have no need to do penance, nor the right to require others to "pay" for their sins.

4. The effects of the atonement. Our question here is what the atonement actually accomplished. We will examine the effects on God the Father, Christ the Son, humanity, and Satan.

a. In relation to God, it is important to affirm that the atonement did not transform a vengeful, angry God into a loving God. As we have emphasized, the atonement flowed from his love. Nor do we affirm that the atonement in any way changed God's character or nature. Yet the atonement did remove the obstacle that hindered communion between a holy God and sinful creatures. Because of the satisfaction of the demands of his righteous nature, God could open wide the door into His presence. From the divine side, the barriers to communion are down for all who come in the name of Jesus.

b. In relation to Jesus, the cross appeared to be the end, but the resurrection revealed its true meaning. Thus, here we must link the cross with the resurrection to see the effects of the atonement for our Lord.

(1) His true nature was revealed (Acts 2:36, Rom. 1:4). The resurrection gave a public, powerful declaration of his true identity as Son of God, Messiah and Lord. On earth his nature had been veiled, and he himself had quieted those who wanted to reveal his identity. But now, the resurrection proclaimed an undeniable message.

(2) He was exalted. The cross was a humiliating death, but Christ knew that it led to exaltation. That was why he could refer to it as his glorification (John 17:1). He knew that those who humble themselves are exalted by God. That is a general rule for all people (James 4:10, I Pet. 5:6) but it was especially demonstrated in Christ (Phil. 2:9-11). His position at the right hand of God is the position of honor (Heb. 1:3, 2:9). And the proclamation made to the spirits in prison (I Pet. 3:18-22) was the proclamation of his victory and exaltation over all authorities, powers, dominions, and angelic beings.

(3) He received authority. Note the opening to the Great Commission in Matt. 28:18: he has received "all authority." He has authority over death and hell (Rev. 1:18); he has authority over his body, the church (Eph. 1:20-23); he has all authority. Therefore (v. 19), he has authority to command our obedience, and His command is to go. We go under his authority.

(4) He received and gave gifts. Acts 2:33 says that Christ received the Spirit from the Father and poured the Spirit out on the church at Pentecost. As well, Eph. 4:11 speaks of gifted leaders (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers) as Christ's gift to his body. We normally associate spiritual gifts with the Holy Spirit, but this passage associates them with Christ's death, resurrection and ascension.

c. In relation to humanity. Most would agree that one effect of the atonement, in at least some lives, is to so reveal the love of God that it produces a responding love (the subjective idea of the atonement). Calvinists emphasize that the atonement actually secures the salvation of the elect, and all believers acknowledge that the atonement is the basis of salvation. But aside from salvation, and all that is included under that subject (which we will study in coming weeks), does the atonement have any other effects on humanity? There are two claims, one ancient, and one modern, that require our consideration and evaluation.

(1) A universal gift of prevenient grace that restores free will. While Arminius did not originate the idea of prevenient grace (it goes back at least to Augustine), this application of it is especially associated with his name. He saw it as necessary to balance the negative effects of original sin. As Adam's sin condemns all to possess a nature that is at enmity with God and a will that rejects God, so Christ in his death restores to all the ability to choose to accept or reject Christ. Arminius saw this as necessary to uphold human responsibility, but the exegetical base is very weak.

(2) Physical healing. More recently, some Pentecostals have claimed that one of the effects of Christ's death is freedom from disease for believers. They appeal to Is. 53:4-5 and Matt. 8:17 to prove their point; that all illness is a result to the fall, and that Christ came to free us from the effects of the fall, including physical ills. "By his stripes we are healed." But I think we must reject this idea for three reasons.

First, we must remember that, according to Matt. 8:17, Jesus "took up our infirmities and carried our diseases" before he went to the cross. Furthermore, there were still sick people in Matt. 9 and 10 and afterwards. I think the point of the prophecy in Is. 53 and the fulfillment in

Matt. 8 is the identification of Jesus with us. The death of Jesus is part of that identification, and leads to our ultimate salvation from all ills, but we cannot use these verses to see physical healing as a result of the atonement.

Second, while we may say that disease as a whole is a result of the fall, we cannot say that each individual sickness is caused by sin in an individual's life (John 9:1-3), nor that God does not purpose to use sickness, either in blessing (John 9:3, II Cor. 12:7), or in judgment (I Cor. 11:30). The idea that God wants all His children to enjoy perfect health is not substantiated by Scripture.

Third, this position confuses the blessings of redemption with the fuller blessings of the consummation. Because of Christ's atoning death, the effects of the fall are already being canceled, and the glorification which culminates salvation will end sickness. In that sense, Christ's death does bring final healing. But we have not yet received what lies ahead, when we partake of that tree whose leaves produce the final healing and the removal of the curse (Rev. 22:1-3). It is not God's will for us to live forever as we now are, and thus physical weakness and death are still inevitable.

d. In relation to Satan, the death of Christ was the definitive defeat. By his death, "the prince of this world" is condemned, judged, driven out (John 12:31, 16:11); our accuser has been silenced (Rev. 12:10-11); demonic powers and authorities have been disarmed (Col. 2:15); and even death has had its sting removed in his resurrection (I Cor. 15:55-56).

II. Historical Illumination. With the wealth of biblical material we have surveyed on the atonement, it is not surprising that there have been some historical differences of interpretation concerning the atonement. We will consider only the two most historically important areas: the nature of the atonement and the extent of the atonement.

A. The Nature of the Atonement. In church history, there have been three main types of interpretations concerning the nature of the atonement. In my opinion, we don't have to choose one and only one. Scripture uses a variety of terms, as we have seen, and each theory can point to at least one term that supports their view. However, it does seem to me that one view is more central than the others.

1. Subjective Theories of the Atonement. The word subjective here refers to the fact that all these theories see the cross as seeking to change how we respond subjectively to God. The value of the atonement is in the response it elicits from us.

There are two basic varieties of this theory: the example theory and moral influence theory, both of which may be traced back to Peter Abelard (1079-1142). A one-time student of Anselm and famous for his affair with Heloise, he broke with his teacher's view of the atonement and proposed that Christ died as an example to us, which we should follow, and that Christ's death inspires us to do so. The second variety has become more important in the 19th and 20th century, especially being championed by H. Bushnell and Hastings Rashdall. It sees the death of

Christ as a demonstration of God's love that influences us to respond to God's love. It denies any need for God to be satisfied; his arms are always open to receive us, and Christ's death exercises a moral influence that impels us to respond to the love of God.

A third and less influential form comes from Schleiermacher, who saw Jesus' distinctiveness in his pure God-consciousness. In his death, there is the possibility of a mystical transference or infusion of that God-consciousness that allows us to live like him.

These theories can claim the support of the biblical idea of example, and it is true that Christ's death does demonstrate the love of God. In fact, the NT points to that almost exclusively as the proof of God's love (John 3:16, Rom. 5:8). But used in isolation from other more complete theories, it cannot really answer why Christ's death is a demonstration of God's love, rather than a tragic mistake. If I am drowning, and someone dies trying to save me, it shows great love. But if I am just splashing in a foot of water and someone dies trying to save me, it is foolish and tragic. According to the subjective theories, we are not in danger from the wrath of God, for He is only loving. Then why was it necessary for Christ to die? This view has no answer.

2. The Classical Theories. The central idea in this family of theories is that of Christ's victory over Satan. It was the earliest of the three theories to develop, appearing first in Irenaeus, who saw Christ as a ransom paid to Satan to justly free those under his sway. Later fathers developed the idea of Christ as the bait used by God to catch Satan. Seeing his human nature, Satan thought he could capture Jesus, but after taking him into his dominion in death, the divine nature was unveiled and Christ arose, shattering the gates of hell and freeing its captives (the fishhook or mousetrap theory).

In this century, this view has been championed by Gustav Aulen in a classic book, *Christus Victor*! He claims this view of Christ's death as the victory over evil powers is the classic or traditional view of the church, and even claims Luther as a proponent. In defense, it may be said that the victory motif in the NT certainly fits this theory, and the idea of redemption or ransom accords with it. But it lacks a coherent explanation of how and why it was that Christ's death was able to defeat our foes. Was it simply because God is more powerful? And if that is so, and God is more powerful, why did Christ die? Why was the battle even that difficult? This theory, too, has some value, but needs supplementing by the other types.

3. Objective Theories. These theories insist that the atonement made an objective change in our condition before God. We need to be sure that we do not teach or imply that the cross changes an angry God into a loving God (as some opponents of the objective theory charge). The atonement itself flows from the love of God (I John 4:10). But there is an objective change. There are now possibilities in terms of our relationship to God that were not possible before. What Christ has done has changed things. Whether or nor humans respond is secondary.

There are two main varieties of this view, with a third subsidiary one. The oldest goes back to Anselm and his famous book *Cur Deus Homo*? (*Why God Became Man*, or more

literally, Why the God-Man). In it, he sees sin as an offense against God's honor. By not submitting ourselves completely to God, we take from Him the honor we ought to show and thus we are in God's debt. But it is a debt we cannot pay, for present obedience cannot make up for past disobedience, since present obedience is required anyway. Moreover, no human can pay for another, for he owes his own debt. Thus, humanity owes a debt to God, that each one must pay, yet no one can repay; no one except God Himself. Man owes the debt and must pay, but only God can pay.

Thus, only the God-man could atone. As man, he could properly represent us; as God, he was able to offer the honor we should have but did not. Christ, since he perfectly honored God, did not deserve death. By freely accepting death for the honor of God, he satisfied God's honor and opened the way to salvation.

Though in this same twelfth century Abelard popularized the subjective theory and Bernard of Clairvaux upheld the classical theory, it was the objective theory that gained most widespread acceptance, for the idea of satisfaction seemed undeniable in the biblical portrayal of the atonement.

The Reformers fall within this same family, but differ from Anselm in seeing sin as a violation of God's law and justice, rather than God's honor. It is the demands of justice that must be satisfied. God's salvation is not just accomplished by sheer force, it must be by a way that is right. This seems to be Paul's concern in Rom. 3; how can God save anyone and do it justly? Christ's death as our substitute and as God's punishment of sin satisfied the demands of God's justice.

This view, called the penal substitutionary view, or vicarious atonement, became far and away the most widely accepted view among Protestants until the Enlightenment, and is still central in evangelical thinking about the atonement today (see John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*; Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, J. I. Packer, introduction to *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*).

Shortly after the Reformation, Hugo Grotius, a Dutch lawyer and statesman, originated a third variety of this family of theories, in which what must be satisfied is God's moral governance of the world. God is viewed as the Supreme Moral Governor, and the death of Christ vindicates God's rule. To let sin be forgiven without punishing it would subvert the moral order of the world. More recent theologians such as P. T. Forsyth, B. B. Warfield, and Emil Brunner have espoused similar positions.

All these objective theories can point to a substantial biblical basis. In fact, I agree with John Stott that the essential ideas in Scripture concerning the atonement are substitution and satisfaction. The terms sacrifice, propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption all contain or imply these themes.

4. Modern Developments. Despite the biblical testimony pointing to the objective theories as the most central idea of the atonement, modern theological thought has

emphasized the subjective approach, at times excluding the objective element, and at times retaining it as a secondary emphasis. The penal substitutionary view has been especially criticized.

Among Baptists, the British Paul Fiddes, in his *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement*, and Fisher Humphreys have been among those criticizing the penal substitutionary view as too cold and sterile, with an overemphasis on God's wrath and retributive punishment. More recently, Joel Green and Mark Baker, in *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, have added their critique, claiming that the penal substitutionary theory, which they acknowledge as the most common theory among evangelicals, "has in some contexts muted the scandal of the cross, in other settings inappropriately scandalized people, and in still other circumstances made the saving significance of the cross and resurrection incomprehensible" (see Baker, *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, 14). Here are some of the criticisms commonly raised against penal substitution.

a. It is too objective. It makes the atonement a mere legal transaction with no human response, and thus no healing of human personality in the act of atonement. Baker says, according to its logic, one could be saved "without experiencing a fundamental reorientation of one's life" (22). Fiddes agrees, saying that simply adding the subjective element as a secondary aspect is insufficient, for it "misses the heart of atonement as the restoring of a relationship between persons . . . in which all estranged partners are involved" (99).

b. It has too active an idea of the wrath of God. Many ridicule the objective idea of atonement and propitiation as teaching a God who delights in punishment, a kind of Shylock who demands his pound of flesh. Others think it drives a wedge into the Godhead, showing a separation between the loving, merciful Son and the punishing, wrathful Father. Some in the emerging church have even raised the suggestion that the cross involves God in cosmic child abuse. Green himself says the penal view "presumes a breakdown of the inner-trinitarian life of God" (Green, *The Nature of the Atonement*, 114).

Fiddes has accepted the idea of Dodd that the wrath of God is just the "natural consequence of human sin" and not a personal active attribute of God. He believes our interpretation of wrath should not restrict the freedom of God to forgive any who repent, apart from any legal retribution. He cites the example of the Prodigal Son, who was welcomed home upon repentance, with no satisfaction made.

This objection overlooks the fact that atonement flows from the love of the Father, as mentioned above (I John 4:10), and is the joint work of Father and Son (God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, II Cor. 5:19). There was no coercion of the Son; rather, he affirmed the will of the Father. Wrath and love can coexist harmoniously in the Godhead.

Moreover, Fiddes does not answer or even acknowledge the challenge of Leon Morris to Dodd's view of wrath, or mention John Stott's explanation of how the Prodigal Son can be seen from within an objective, substitutionary view of the atonement (see *The Cross of Christ*, pp. 222-224). And at any rate, while the prodigal son does teach us about God's great mercy, it does

not speak to the atonement, for that event still lay in the future, and Christ's more explicit teaching on his death does speak in penal, substitutionary terms (Mk. 10:45).

c. The penal substitutionary theory, especially as developed by Calvin, relies upon "a retributive view of penalty, and in this it is heavily conditioned by its social context" (p. 102). Fiddes notes, correctly, that Anselm's idea of God's honor rings much truer in a feudal society than in our own, and that law was becoming important in Calvin's time as a check against the arbitrary power of princes. We could go further and note that Grotius's idea of God as moral governor arose with the development of international law, and that the Christus victor motif regained favor in a world racked by two world wars, and that the subjective theories have been viewed most favorably in our century, when all things human are elevated and all things divine diminished. This is but to acknowledge that all of theology is historically conditioned, including today's. The question is whether the historical conditioning has warped the biblical content.

I believe that a far better case can be made for the biblical endorsement of a retributive theory of punishment than for the modern idea that Fiddes endorses (that the principal reason for inflicting a penalty should be to reform the offender). For example, when Fiddes says, "What justice demands is not payment but repentance," he is on very shaky ground theologically. What then of humans who do not repent? Can justice never reach them? I prefer to affirm with Abraham that the Judge of all the earth will do what is right, and the right (or just) that he does is not dependent on the subjective response of a human, but on an objective satisfaction of justice, the justice which resides in and is a reflection of the divine nature. (See also the arguments of C. S. Lewis on this subject in *God in the Dock,* pp. 287-300). Moreover, whether Anselm's or Calvin's formulation is best or not, some formulation that includes the idea of substitution and satisfaction is necessary. As Leon Morris insists, "God saves us in a way that is right;" that is, a way that is consistent with His description in Scripture as a holy and merciful God" (*The Cross of Jesus*, p. 18).

d. Another criticism made by Green and Baker is that there are a multiplicity of images in the Bible for the atonement and that there have been other views widely held in church history, so there should be no idea that the penal substitution view is the only view or even the primary view that should be taught. Green uses the image of a kaleidoscope to characterize his view of the atonement (see *The Nature of the Atonement, Four Views*).

When they add to that their conviction that penal substitution will not connect with hearers in many contexts, and that it can even be used to justify passive acceptance of abuse and encourage violence, they see good reason to at least demote it from a primary place in evangelical presentations of the cross. The whole reason for the book edited by Mark Baker (*Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*) was to give examples of other ways to contextualize the atonement for contemporary audiences.

Yet in the end, few if any of the contemporary critics think we can totally dismiss the idea of penal substitution. Green and Baker acknowledge that there are careful formulations of penal substitution that are not subject to their objections; they just think that the popular view

presents a God we need to be saved from. Likewise, Fiddes does not deny the possibility of an objective element. He recognizes that the atonement is tied to an event that happened 2000 years ago, and he tries to balance objective and subjective. But the weight and primacy is always given to the subjective.

The problem with these criticisms is the stubborn and solid biblical support for the elements of penal and substitution in the atonement. Some of the criticisms may apply to some crude expressions of the penal substitutionary view, but a careful, thorough formulation of the objective view is not weakened by any of the objections offered. Nor do wise proponents claim that penal substitution is the only biblical way to speak about the cross. But I see no other view that gives a satisfactory answer to the question of why Christ had to die for our salvation.

Fiddes attempts to give an answer, recognizing this as the standard objection offered against the subjective view:

> There is, of course, a straightforward answer to the question as to why the love of God is demonstrated finally in the death of Christ: it is because God himself undergoes the bitter depths of human experience in the cross. God, we may say, shows his love by enduring to the uttermost the estrangement of his own creation. (157).

He believes this answer was not seen by Abelard and others earlier because of mistaken ideas of God's impassibility. That may be so, but they may also have seen that it doesn't really answer the question. To use the common analogy of someone drowning, to come out and drown with me shows remarkable compassion and empathy, but is that the best God can do? I would much prefer a Savior to a fellow Sufferer.

Perhaps the problem boils down to a different view of what salvation requires. Certainly, salvation should involve a reorientation of life to one of love for God and neighbor, and certainly humans have enemies they need victory over, and the subjective and classical views provide these elements of salvation. But it was God who pronounced death as the penalty for sin. How can he now justly allow sinners to escape? Can present repentance suffice to provide forgiveness for past sin? The conflict between God's holiness and human sin is one that human response alone cannot resolve. Thus objective approaches are essential.

B. The Extent of the Atonement. The question, "For whom did Christ die?" has been one of the most disputed questions concerning the atonement down through history, and one of special importance in Baptist history, since it was the point of division for the earliest Baptists (General and Particular). Of the 5 points of Calvinism, this is the one most often dropped by those otherwise Calvinistic (4 point Calvinists or Amyraldists), and there is even a serious question as to whether Calvin was a 5 point Calvinist.

Its importance lies not only in its own intrinsic value, but the implications it carries for other areas of theology, such as the relationship of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, the achievement of Christ on the cross, Christ as Savior, and how one presents the gospel. It is also related to the objectivity or subjectivity of the atonement, for a strong emphasis on the

objectivity of the atonement pushes one toward either universal salvation (as it did Karl Barth) or particular atonement (as it did many earlier Baptists).

There are three possible interpretations of this issue, though only two are usually considered as live options by evangelicals. (1) Universalism: Christ died for all; therefore, all are saved. (2) General (sometimes called universal): Christ died for all, but only those who respond in faith are saved. (3) Limited (or particular): Christ died for a limited, particular group, all of whom are saved.

The last two represent the Arminian and Calvinist positions. It should be noted that one reason why they end up with differing conclusions is that they formulate the question in different ways. Arminians focus on the extent of the provision of atonement: did Christ purpose to make provision for both the elect, whom He would draw to faith, and for the non-elect, whose salvation He also desires? Calvinists frame the question in terms of the extent of the application of the atonement: does Christ's death actually pay for the sins of all people or only the elect? Arminians do not deny that the application of the atonement is limited; nor do Calvinists deny that the death of Christ is sufficient for humanity in general. Thus, the way one puts the question influences the answer one receives.

1. Arguments for general atonement. There are several lines of argument used by the proponents of general atonement. There are several specific verses with a universal referent: John 1:29, 3:16, I Tim. 2:6, 4:10, II Pet. 3:9, I John 2:2. Further, there are theological arguments that can be made. God often provides more than we appropriate. For example, much of the universal revelation in the world is ignored. It is also argued that II Pet. 2:1 claims some of those bought by the Master are unbelievers, and not just the elect. There has also been a historical reminder used by Arminians, that five point Calvinism has often led to sterility and a lack of missions and evangelism (hyper-Calvinism).

2. Arguments for limited atonement. Some verses state that Christ died for a specific group: "his people" (Matt. 1:21); "his sheep (John 10:14-15); "his church" (Eph. 5:25). But the stronger support comes from reflection on the idea of Jesus as Savior. He didn't just make my salvation possible; He saved me! J. I. Packer says, "we are all Calvinists on our knees," because there we call Jesus Savior, not just possibility-maker. Furthermore, if Christ really died for all, if he paid for their sins, then God would be wrong to punish them again. Finally, the ideas of redemption, sacrifice, and propitiation imply a definite atonement.

3. Evaluation. Despite gallant Calvinists efforts to explain the "all" in I John 2:2, I Tim. 4:10, and other verses as all types of people, those interpretations seem weak to me. Arminians have the better case on these verses. And I have seen no explanation of II Pet. 2:1 that makes sense under a view of limited atonement. But Calvinists seem to me to have the stronger theological argument: Jesus is Savior, not just he who makes salvation possible. And if Christ really paid the debt for non-believers, how can God judge and condemn them to hell?

So I find myself unsettled on this issue. One formulation acceptable to both groups is that the atonement is "sufficient for all but efficient for the elect" (or for all who believe). Again,

the way the question is formulated is critical. For example, I find myself leaning toward limited atonement when the question is: does Christ's death just make salvation possible for all, or does it actually secure the salvation of the elect? And general atonement is more acceptable when the question is: does Christ's death make provision not only for the elect, but also for the non-elect, whom God mysteriously passes over, and yet whose salvation God in some way desires? Such ambiguous solutions may be as far as we can go. I think there must be room for diversity here. Holding to general atonement need not lead to universalism, and holding to limited atonement need not lead to coldness in evangelism. Most Baptist theologians until recently have been 5 point Calvinists, so it cannot be dismissed as un-Baptist, but it is definitely a minority viewpoint among Baptists today.

III. Theological Formulation. The atonement is such an overwhelmingly important doctrine, and such a supremely central theme in Scripture that it is hard to get a firm handle on it. How do we synthesize all this material into a coherent theological whole? Rather than repeat all we have already said, let me try to draw out the key points we need to keep before us.

A. Keep substitution and satisfaction as the center of the atonement. Our examination of the seven key terms justifies their position at the center. If those truths are lost, the entire meaning of the atonement starts to crumble.

B. Look for an effective model to communicate those central truths in this culture. We may acknowledge with Fiddes that interpretations are historically conditioned, and derive part of their popularity from the fact that they fit well within the culture of their times. We are willing to look at the examples produced by Baker of ways to effectively communicate the message of the cross to contemporary culture. If such models can be found that communicate the same central truths, that would be great. I think it is much more likely that we simply need better communication of that model, rather than a better model.

C. While I would insist that the objective theories best portray the ideas of substitution and satisfaction and thus must remain central, we may acknowledge and should understand the value of all three atonement theories. As we showed, all three major theories can claim some biblical base. And all have some positive value. The objective stream insists on the biblical truth that God simply can't ignore or overlook sin. It must be dealt with. The requirement is inherent within God's nature. The joy is that God has dealt with sin and thus we are assured of ultimate acceptance.

The subjective view alone is insufficient, but when combined with the objective view, it does allow us to see the greatness of God's love and the depth of Christ's identification. The death Christ died was an act of unconditional love, precisely because it was necessary to save us. And we find that it does awaken a responsive love (I John 4:19).

The classical view reminds us that Christ's death delivers us from enemies that would harm us. It is not just limited to its effect on God or me; the cross has cosmic significance. Our enemies may trouble us here for a time, but the atonement promises ultimate victory and deliverance.

D. Emphasize the accomplishment of the atonement. By this, I mean we need to highlight the finality and sufficiency of the atonement. Humanity, especially late 20th century humanity, has such a tendency to want to earn our way, or merit what we receive, or think that it all depends on us, and it does not. The key to a healthy, joyful Christian life is living in the knowledge that Jesus really did pay it all; and that I owe all I am and have to Him. What I do cannot add to what He has done. Even my faith does not save me; Jesus saved me!

Further, we need to emphasize the historicity of the cross. How can we be so arrogant as to suggest that only Jesus saves? We must point to the unique saving power of the cross. Only Jesus' death can satisfy the demands of God's holiness against a human's sin; therefore only He can save. It is rooted in the unique, actual, historical accomplishment of the cross.

IV. Practical Applications.

A. Teach it. If the work of Christ is the basis for our salvation, then it merits more study than most Christians and churches give it. A firm grasp of the work of Christ fortified believers in past years, and can and should do so today.

One way churches can teach the work of Christ is by calling attention to the doctrine that is in the songs we sing. For example, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" gives a thoroughly subjective view of the atonement; "Jesus Paid It All" or “In Christ Alone” state the objective view; "A Mighty Fortress" expresses the classical motif of victory. Explain the doctrinal meaning behind the words.

B. Live it. If the cross is the center of the Christian faith, it must shape the Christian life. A model of what this means can be seen in Part IV of John Stott's *The Cross of Christ*, entitled "Living Under the Cross." He outlines the impact of the cross on four key relationships:

1. In our relationship to God, the cross should produce attitudes of joy, boldness, and love, should lead to meaningful celebration of the Lord's Supper, and be emulated in the offering of spiritual sacrifices by believer-priests. He notes that only Christianity is a religion of celebratory singing of grace and forgiveness.

2. In our relationship to ourselves, the cross teaches us to deny our false, fallen self (as we are called to take up our crosses and crucify the sinful nature) and to be true to our true selves (that new creation we become through the cross), and leads to self-giving, sacrificial, serving love in the home, church, and world. All relationships of authority must be exercised in the spirit of servanthood, following the model of the Crucified One (Mk. 10:45).

3. In our relationship to enemies and evil in the world, the cross calls us to stand for justice (as God did in requiring sin to be punished) and to overcome evil with good (as Christ triumphed by suffering).

4. In our relationship to suffering, the cross teaches us endurance in suffering, that suffering can be redemptive, that it may be a necessary part of service, and that we have a sure hope of final glory beyond suffering. Above all, the cross shows us a God who did not hold himself immune from suffering. In contrast to the remote, detached Buddha with closed eyes, we know a God who entered our suffering to bear and transform it. As Stott says, "I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross" (335). The playlet "The Long Silence" provides perhaps the best answer to evil that theology can give, and it is founded on God's suffering in the cross (see 336-337).

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY II
UNIT 3: THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION
OUTLINE

I. Different Conceptions of Salvation.
- A. As to Time: Event or Process?
- B. As to Need.
- C. As to Medium.
- D. As to Extent.
- E. As to Objects of Salvation.

II.The Essence of Salvation: Union with Christ.
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  - 1. Old Testament images.
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  - 3. Metaphysical.
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  - 4. Grace is unmerited favor.
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- B. Faith: The Human Response to God’s Grace.
  - 1. The elements of faith.
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IV. The *Ordo Salutis*

- A. The Work of God Before Time: Foreknowledge, Predestination, Election.
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  - 2. Historical developments.
    - a. Augustine and Pelagius.

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1. The necessity of dealing with election.
2. The benefits of knowing about election.
3. The spirit in which to study election.
4. A definition of election.
5. Scriptural teaching on election.
6. Objections to election.

c. Arminius and the Synod of Dort.
d. Baptist history.
e. Karl Barth.

3. Theological formulation.
   a. Election is God's decision to redeem a certain specific group and conform them to the image of Christ.
   b. Election is placed "before the foundation of the world."
   c. Election is unconditional.
   d. A biblical understanding of election leads to worship and adoration of God's grace.
   e. Election is not symmetrical.
   f. Election is "in Christ."

4. Practical applications.

B. The Work of God at Conversion.
1. Calling.
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3. Justification.
   a. The historical background of the Reformation.
   b. The biblical meaning of justification.
   c. Theological summary of justification.
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C. The Work of God Throughout the Christian Life.
1. Old Testament background.
2. New Testament teaching.
3. Differing models of sanctification.
4. Hindrances to sanctification.
5. Perseverance and sanctification.
   a. The Arminian position.
   b. The hypothetical position.
   c. The "flawed faith" or "prodigal son" position.

D. The Work of God Completed: Glorification.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY II
UNIT 3: THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

We have looked at what Christ did on the cross to save us; now we will consider the application of that work to the heart and life of the believer. On a number of issues, the biblical foundations for various aspects of this doctrine is so intertwined with historical controversies that I have chosen to treat historical considerations alongside the biblical foundations, rather than separating them, as I normally do.

I. Different Conceptions of Salvation. While we as evangelicals generally know what we mean by the word "salvation," we need to be aware that it is used in different senses in some theological circles. Here are some issues to note.

A. As to Time: is salvation an event or a process? The traditional Roman Catholic view is that salvation (justification) is the process of becoming just, or righteous. Baptism places you on the road to salvation, the sacraments and good deeds take you down the road toward it, and then it is finished in purgatory.

Evangelicals have emphasized salvation as an event, but we can and should incorporate the idea of process as well. As an event, we have been saved from the penalty of sin (justification). As a process, we are being saved from the power of sin (sanctification). One day, in the final event of God's plan, we will be saved from the presence of sin (glorification). All are aspects of salvation.

B. As to Need. The traditional formulation has emphasized the need to be saved from the righteous wrath of God that our sin calls forth, and restored to a proper relationship with him. Thus, the primary idea in salvation is vertical.

Many contemporary formulations interpret salvation horizontally: saved from oppressive social structures (liberation theology), saved from meaningless, anxiety (often mixed in evangelical preaching), saved from broken human relationships (save my marriage, my family). Beware of overstressing the horizontal. There is some validity to it, but until we deal with salvation from sin and what it has done to us before God, we haven't dealt with salvation.

The preaching that emphasizes horizontal salvation also has a problem preaching to people in good times. One of the major reasons a lot of Americans have no desire for salvation is that they have no horizontal needs. They desire no change. What can you do for such people? (1) pray for a Matt. 7 type storm that will show them their flimsy foundations; (2) pray for conviction of sin; (3) point to death, the storm that all must face. If this is called scaring people, well, fright is the proper response in light of the judgment we face.

C. As to Medium. How does one get saved? The Catholic answer has focused on the sacraments; liberation theology on overthrowing oppressive structures; some look to psychologists to help them find resolution of conflicts and achieve a healthy psyche; evangelicals look to salvation by grace through faith.

D. As to Extent (see Luke 13:23-24). Will all be saved (universalism)? or only some? The fate, especially of those unevangelized, is one of the most pressing questions in this area.

E. As to Objects of Salvation. Does salvation extend to humans only, or is the creation too affected by the work of Christ (Rom. 8:18-25)? The Scripture seems to affirm that creation too longs for redemption, and is awaiting the consummation of all things.

II. The Essence of Salvation. While there are many ways to describe what happens in salvation (forgiveness, eternal life, justification, adoption, etc.), I think the best phrase for the essence of salvation is union with Christ.

A. Biblical Pictures of Union with Christ.

1. In the OT, there are a variety of images that show the solidarity that exists between the Messiah and his people. In Is. 7:14, he is Immanuel, God with us; in Is. 53, he identifies himself with his people's sin, suffering in their place; Jer. 23:5 and 33:15 speak of the branch who is our righteousness; in Ezek. 34:23, he is our shepherd, and in Dan. 7:13-14, he is not only the Son of God, but the Son of man. In all these images, there is the idea of one who is united to his people.

2. In the NT, the Incarnation is the greatest act of union and identification ever seen. Moreover, faith in the NT is primarily faith in Christ. It directs someone toward union with him.

Beyond these broader categories, the two clearest images are in John and Paul. John speaks of the necessity of abiding in the vine (John 15), a clear picture of union with Christ, while Paul's favorite phrase to describe a Christian is someone "in Christ." In Eph. 1:3-14, he uses that phrase 10 times to detail all the blessings that come from that union.

B. The Nature of Union with Christ. During the history of the church, there have been a number of ideas concerning the nature of the union of believers with Christ.

1. Sacramental. This is the idea that we are in a real, almost physical sense united with Christ through the sacraments. We partake of his body and blood, and as the church we are the continuation of the Incarnation, truly the body of Christ on earth. But this depends on a faulty view of the Lord's Supper, and an excessively literal view of the metaphor of the church as the body of Christ, and loses the historical uniqueness of the Incarnation.

2. Mystical. By meditation and contemplation, we achieve a union so complete and profound that we lose any sense of individuality. This was the goal of numerous Catholic mystics, and is the interpretation of Gal. 2:20 favored by some evangelicals. But it should be noted that the union of Paul with Christ never extinguished his own identity (he still speaks of "the life I live"). Union with Christ does not destroy our individuality or personality, but transforms and redirects it.

3. *Theosis*. I use this term for an idea popular in theologians such as Athanasius in the early church, and a view that continued in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Drawing upon II Pet. 1:4 and the idea of becoming "partakers of the divine nature," this type of theology saw union with Christ as deification or *theosis*. It does not suggest that we become gods, in the sense that Mormon theology has suggested, but in the sense that our union with Christ leads to a complete restoration of our creation in God's image.

4. Moral. This view emphasizes that union is just a metaphor or simile. It simply means we are followers of Christ, on his team, identified with his cause. Whereas some of the other views seem to press the idea of union too far, this view doesn't seem to do it enough justice.

5. Spiritual. I believe the union of the believer with Christ is a real, vital, life-giving, spiritual union, accomplished by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and his union with our spirit. Note the close association of Jesus and the Spirit in Rom. 8:9-11, II Cor. 3:17-18, John 14:16. Christ still has his human body (a glorified, spiritual body, but still a body), and is located at the right hand of God. As God, he is omnipresent, but in his human nature, he has a location (though Luther, through the idea of the *communicatio idiomatum*, believed in the ubiquity or omnipresence of the body of Christ). Christ lives in us by means of the Holy Spirit. Calvin says, "The Holy Spirit is the means by which Christ effectively links us to himself."

This seems to most fit a number of biblical metaphors: he is the head, we are the body; he is the vine, we are the branches. We are both united to and yet distinct from Christ in a spiritual, living union.

C. The Means of Union with Christ. If union with Christ is the essence of salvation, then the means to union with Christ is the same as the means of salvation: faith in Him.

D. The Results of Union with Christ. We share all he is and has: his righteousness (I Cor. 1:30), his power (II Cor. 12:9), his authority in spiritual warfare (Matt. 28:18-20), his sufferings (Phil. 3:8-10), and his kingdom (II Tim. 2:12). In fact, every spiritual blessing we experience as believers is a fruit of our union with Christ (Eph. 1:4).

III. The Two Sides of Conversion: "by grace through faith."

A. God's gift of grace. It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of grace, especially in relation to the doctrine of salvation. The word *charis* is found 155 times in the NT, 100 times alone in the writings of Paul. While Scripture does teach the idea of common grace, which applies to all on the level of providence, grace normally relates to salvation and those who receive God's spiritual blessings (special grace). We may define grace in this sense as all that God does to save and restore lost sinners. We may note several aspects of grace.

1. Grace is manifested in Christ. The clearest example of grace is seen in the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Paul uses the word "grace" to refer to his whole life (II Cor. 8:9). John says that Jesus came to us "full of grace," and that from that grace

we have received grace upon grace (one gracious blessing after another) and contrasts Moses the law-giver with Jesus the grace-bringer (John 1:14-17). Thus, it is altogether appropriate that God's people sing of the "Wonderful Grace of Jesus," for we see grace most clearly in all that he is and has done for us.

2. Grace is the ultimate basis of salvation. While it is true to say in one sense that we are saved by faith (as the instrument of acceptance) and true in another sense to say that we are saved by Christ and his death on the cross (as the means by which we are saved), behind both of these lies the grace of God as the ultimate basis (see Rom. 3:24-25: by grace, through Christ's redemption, through faith in his blood). Apart from a gracious God, there would have been no incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. Apart from the gracious work of the Spirit in an individual's life, faith is never born. It is grace that brings salvation (Tit. 2:11). So we sing "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!"

3. Grace is also the pattern for the Christian life. Not only are we saved by grace, we must also live by grace. Rom. 5:2 tells us that we stand in grace; Heb. 4:16 instructs us to approach the throne of grace to find grace to help us in time of need; Heb. 13:9 encourages us to strengthen our hearts by grace. It is not just for salvation; we never outgrow our need for grace to live the Christian life. So we sing, “O to grace how great a debtor, daily I’m constrained to be.”

4. Grace is unmerited favor. Therefore, on the one hand it humbles us and makes us recognize our true position. We have no bargaining power, no right to God's grace. We receive it as a gift, or not at all. On the other hand, because it is not based on merit, neither can we lose it, or have it revoked when God finds out how rotten we really are. Human merit is irrelevant; grace is given at God's discretion, and his gifts, once given, are not taken back (Rom. 11:29). Thus, grace strengthens and assures us that our life, salvation, and destiny do not rest on our puny abilities, but on God's omnipotent grace.

5. Grace is received solely through faith (Eph. 2:8). This was one of the themes of the Reformation, in opposition to the ideas that one could earn grace, or receive an infusion of grace automatically through the sacraments. The Reformers, and much of Protestant theology, have spoken of sacraments, along with prayer, Bible reading and other spiritual disciplines as "the means of grace," but no actions, in and of themselves, have any value, apart from faith. When done in faith, however, these can be the means of receiving sustaining grace for living the Christian life. In fact, almost all the blessings we receive from God involve receiving them in faith. This is why Richard Lovelace says that growth in faith is the basis of all growth in the Christian life (see Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*).

6. Grace is neither cheap, nor costly; it is free (Rev. 22:17; see also Rom. 6:23, where the "free gift" of God is *charisma*). Inherent in the idea of being a gift that cannot be earned is the idea of free grace.

One error people often make is concluding that because merit is irrelevant to grace, one can receive grace and live as he pleases. This is the heresy of cheap grace, which Paul had to

combat as early as Rom. 6:1-2. Another version of this heresy sees faith as the price of grace; that faith earns or purchases grace; then, again, after one receives grace, he is free to live as he pleases.

The reason why free grace does not lead to cheap grace is because authentic grace does not simply pardon one's past sins, it transforms one's present and future actions and motives. One who claims to receive God's grace but has no change in desires and attitudes is deceived. They tried to obtain cheap grace, but it does not exist. The genuine grace of God teaches us to live holy lives (Titus 2:12).

Neither is grace costly grace. It cost Christ his life to turn away God's wrath, but for us it is free. There is nothing we must do to receive or continue in God's grace. It is a free gift.

Thus, to those who ask, "how much must I do to please God?" we respond, "everything and nothing." To those who want to buy grace cheaply at the price of a purely mental faith, we respond that faith involves placing all one is in the hands of another; it involves everything. To those who fear that they must clean themselves up to receive grace, and keep clean to continue in grace, we respond that God's grace is not for sale. It may be bought neither at the cheap price of a dead, purely intellectual faith, nor at the costly price of a holy, self-denying life. It cannot be bought, but only received as a life-changing gift, that inevitably leads to gratitude and a desire to express gratitude in a life of obedience. Gratitude leads to deeper commitment than fear.

7. Grace is irresistible. One of the traditional areas of controversy between Arminians and Calvinists has been over whether or not the grace of God always realizes its purposes in matters of salvation. Because grace is the grace of the Almighty God, who "works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (Eph. 1:11); because Jesus said, "all that the Father gives me will come to me" (John 6:37); because God promises that he will complete the good work he began in us (Phil. 1:6); because I think salvation is God's doing, I affirm that God's grace is irresistible, in the sense that none of those God elects and predestines will successfully resist the power of God's grace in their lives.

Others insist that surely we must conclude that God's grace is resisted, for does God not love all and want all to come to repentance? These would affirm that grace is universal, but salvation is not. In classical Arminian thought, there is a gift of universal prevenient grace that restores the ability to respond to the offer of saving grace in the gospel, but not everyone is saved; not everyone responds to the grace shown in Jesus. In this sense, they resist the grace of God.

We may use these two variables of irresistibility and universality to clarify the options on this issue. There are at least three: (1) Grace is both universal and irresistible; thus, all will be saved (fairly similar to what Barth seems to hope for); (2) grace is irresistible, but not universal (it is extended only to the elect; the traditional Calvinist position); (3) grace is universal but not irresistible (Arminianism). The saved are those who choose to respond to God's offer of grace.

The first option, universalism, is obviously unsatisfactory for any evangelical. I dislike the third option for three reasons: (1) I see no evidence for the Arminian idea of universal prevenient grace, (2) I think it makes human choice the ultimate basis for salvation, and most of all (3) I simply see the biblical portrayal of the power of God exercised in saving grace as a power that is best described as irresistible.

So I am willing to accept the second position, irresistible grace, but believe it may be possible to state it a bit more exactly, in a fourth option: (4) Grace is universal, but only special, saving grace is irresistible. God shows his goodness in extending the blessings of what is called common grace to all (see Ps. 145:8-9; Matt 5:44-45; Acts 14:16-17). While special saving grace always accomplishes its work, common grace has as its design, not only the sustaining of physical life, but also the awakening of consciences to the kindness of God. And it appears that in that latter function, common grace is at times resisted (Rom. 2:4-5). So while God is good to all in some ways, in providing common grace, he has chosen some to be his elect. They find the work of grace in their hearts to be irresistible.

The problem many see with this position is that it leads logically to the conclusion "that those who reject the gospel remain lost because God wants them lost;" that is, that "God offers salvation from eternal damnation while at the same time withholding the ability to accept it" (Keathley in *Theology for the Church*, 725). To avoid this problem, to clarify the genuineness of God's offer of salvation to all, and to underscore human responsibility for rejecting the gospel, Ken Keathley postulates a position, not of irresistible grace nor universal prevenient grace, but "sufficient overcoming grace." He describes this grace as accomplishing the work of conviction and enablement in every believer, but it is not a "universal or permanent" work. He says, "Tragically, God's grace can be successfully resisted; however, for those who believe, his grace is overcoming rather than irresistible" (726). The unanswered question is, why do some find it overcoming and some do not? Is the grace operating in those who come to believe different than that at work in those who resist? Keathley says not: "There is no dividing or distinguishing between the grace offered to those who believe and those who do not" (726-7).

Here is where I have to differ. If there is no difference in what God does for the one who comes to believe and the one who does not, then human choice is the final determining factor in salvation, and I think the biblical description of God as Savior does not make sense if, in the end, all he does is make it possible for humans to save themselves by their choice to believe. I think it takes away from the utterly gracious nature of salvation.

Of course, Keathley is correct that it leaves me with the problem of the lost. Why does God not choose to extend irresistible grace to them? I want to contend that the cause of their condemnation lies in them; they freely choose to run from God and hide in the darkness. Yet so did believers, before they were drawn to respond by irresistible grace. Why not extend this same powerful grace to all? My answer to this question is the same as that of Martin Luther: I don't know why God doesn't save all. He certainly can overcome human opposition via the Spirit's gracious work in conviction and drawing, but he does not do so with all persons. I will mention in passing that Arminians cannot fully get God off the hook either, for they affirm that God foreknows before the foundation of the world who will and will not choose to respond to the

offer of grace. Why not only allow those who will believe to be born? I think the only answer possible would be that to do so would be to make human freedom a charade or illusion. Still, my problem then would be that God does intervene in human freedom at times; he arrested my opposition and extended irresistible grace to me (see Paul's description as well, Phil. 3:12).

I think part of our problem with this issue is that we think that justice requires God to treat everyone the same. Equal treatment under the law seems a self evident axiom to us. Yet, is it so? Can God be just to all but more than just to some? I affirm that God treats all with justice, but I do not think that we can maintain that God treats all equally. Some humans have more abilities than others; some have more opportunities to hear of Christ, or to grow as Christians. Some have many more obstacles in their background. God knows and judges fairly (Luke 12:47-48). But I do not think we can maintain that God treats everyone the same. If He did, I think all would be saved, or none would be saved. In fact, I think unequal yet fair treatment is one of the truths taught in the parable of the laborers in Matt. 20:1-16. He is fair and gracious to all to some degree. But to some, he is much more than fair; these find his grace irresistible.

B. Faith: the human response to God's grace. As grace is the most important word with respect to the divine initiative in salvation, faith is the central word for the human response (recognizing that even faith itself is also the gift of God; see Eph. 2:8, Acts 11:18).

1. The elements of faith. Because faith is used in a variety of ways, both in Scripture and in contemporary life, it is important to note the elements involved in true biblical faith. The Reformers distinguished three elements in faith: *notitia* (awareness of the facts of the gospel), *assensus* (belief that these facts were true), and *fiducia* (personal confidence and trust). Or, to use the terminology of Ken Keathley and others, faith involves knowledge, assent, and appropriation.

We may say that the first two represent faith that something is true, an intellectual aspect of faith. The last represents faith in someone, a volitional aspect. Biblical faith focuses on the latter aspect of faith. We find the phrase *pisteuo eis* (believe in) 49 times in the NT. It means faith is above all placing trust, confidence, reliance in the person of Jesus Christ, placing one's life, for now and forever, in his keeping.

In the contemporary context, I think the intellectual aspect of faith too much dominates our thinking about becoming a Christian and our practice of evangelism. For example, should we think of Christians as *believers* (of certain truths) or *followers* (of a certain person)? Should we see evangelism as information transfer, or life transformation? Surely the latter in both cases. I think the need is for better ways to describe the volitional aspect of faith.

But faith does have an intellectual element as well. One must understand something about this Jesus in whom one is to trust, and why one needs to trust him, and in an increasingly biblical illiterate culture, more and more of the Bible's story line may need to be told as essential background. This raises the important and difficult question of how much one must understand to make a valid decision to trust Christ for salvation. I do not think one necessarily needs to understand the intricacies of the Trinity or be able to articulate the hypostatic union of the divine

and human natures of Christ, but neither is it enough to simply "believe in God," as more than 90% of Americans say they do. What must one understand? Here, in my opinion, are the essentials of the gospel.

In my opinion, one must understand that God is the Creator, that one's life is a gift from him, to be used in keeping with his purposes. It is not by chance that Scripture begins with God the Creator. It is the essential background to our relationship with God. Because we are created by God, we are responsible before God for how we use our lives.

This is bad news, for all have lived, to a greater or lesser extent, according to their own desires. Even when doing what is right, they have done so because they chose to, not in obedience to the will of the Creator, and out of a heartfelt love for him. This is what the Bible calls sin. Because of that sin, we are under God's righteous wrath, for sin arouses his wrath. But because God is also a God of love, he planned a way of escape. Jesus came as the expression of God's love, showing God's nature and voluntarily bearing the wrath of God toward our sin on the cross. He paid the penalty of sin in our place, and rose to show that God accepted his death in the place of guilty sinners, and that he had power over death.

As Lord of life and death, and Savior from sin, he offers forgiveness, eternal life, and divine fellowship to all who repent from sin and trust him as Savior and Lord.

This is, in my opinion, the gospel in a nutshell: God, the Creator and giver of life; humans, the sinners and abusers of God's gifts; Jesus, the Savior through his life, death in our place, and resurrection; whole-hearted faith in him as the necessary response. But increasingly in our post-Christian age, this simple message will require more and more background and explanation to clear away misconceptions and inaccurate assumptions.

2. The commitment of faith. One question needs further clarification: what type of commitment is involved in accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord? Is it possible to accept Christ as Savior, but not as Lord? This is the issue of what is called "Lordship salvation." In the late 1950's and early 60's, it was debated by John Stott and Everett Harrison. More recently, the protagonists have been Zane Hodges with some support from Charles Ryrie on one side, and John MacArthur on the other.

Both sides have an important truth to preserve. Hodges and Ryrie want to deny any tinge of works salvation, and allow for growth in a Christian's life and commitment following salvation. The latter concern certainly rings true in experience for many Christians, especially those raised in Christian homes and converted at an early age. MacArthur's concern is to reject "easy believism," seeing it, correctly, as a perversion of the gospel.

We return to the question, "Is it possible to accept Christ as Savior, but not Lord?" I think we must answer "no." The most primitive and basic Christian confession was "Jesus is Lord" (I Cor. 12:3). Even those who have no theological knowledge must recognize that one who can die in my place, can reveal God, and rise victorious over death must be more than just another man. There must be an instinctive recognition that he is Lord. And there must be at

least the seed of submission to Him as Lord. It seems to me that such a seed in inherent in the nature of faith as *fiducia*. One can't receive Christ's saving benefits while holding him at arm's length.

Certainly we must allow for growth, for recognizing the implications of accepting Christ and following Him, and for periods of rebellion and sin (though the carnal Christian can be such for only a period, never as a permanent lifestyle). Yet, when all is said and done, when one comes to Christ, recognizing that one is lost without him, seeing in Christ one's only hope, that decision must include some recognition, incomplete and dim though it may be, that "I now belong to Him. I am no longer free to live as I please." Again, if the essence of conversion is union with Christ, one cannot unite with only one aspect of Him. He is who He is--Savior and Lord. One who wants to accept the benefits of Christ without uniting himself to Christ wants a salvation that cannot be, and should be better instructed.

No doubt part of our problem here is hasty, ill-informed evangelism, pushing for decisions before people understand what it means to be lost, and accepting as valid professions of faith the sincere but immature statements of preschoolers, who lack the mental equipment to understand adequately the statements to which they willingly give assent. They have *assensus*, but I doubt they understand and have *fiducia*. In the grace of God, many of these will hear the gospel and grow into a fuller faith, but when and where they cross the line from immature faith to genuine faith may be difficult for them to discern. Some may even state that they accepted Christ as Savior at an early age, but accepted him as Lord later. Others may wonder later whether or not they were truly believers when they were baptized (rebaptism among Southern Baptist church members is becoming epidemic, accounting for more than half of all adult baptisms in a 1993 NAMB study).

The solution to these problems is a more thorough and patient evangelism (including a much more careful attempt to baptize only upon a credible profession of faith), one that resists pushing for premature, uninformed decisions, and trusts in God to do the work of conversion without our use of emotional manipulation. (For a helpful diagram of the steps in conversion, see "The Spiritual Decision Process" in James Engel and Wilbert Norton, *What's Gone Wrong With the Harvest?* or the understanding of the gospel described in Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*).

3. A definition of faith. In a long chapter of the *Institutes* (50 pages), Calvin examines faith and offers this definition: "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (*Institutes*, III.ii.7). There is certainly a mental component in this view of faith (knowing the promise given in Christ), but the emphasis is on *fiducia*, the element of personal trust and confidence (in God's benevolence toward us). Calvin also adds the basis for faith: the work of the Holy Spirit.

While this is a fine definition, a more practical one was used by my pastor in college: "faith is knowing enough to act." Initially, of course, he is speaking of knowing enough about the gospel, the need for a Savior, and of Christ to act to receive him and follow him. But I think

it fits the continuing need to trust Christ in specific situations. As we come to know him more and more, we should be able to trust him more and more. And at times he calls on us to trust him more and more as we mature.

4. The efficacy of faith. Though we discussed the limited sense in which it can be said that we are saved by faith, we need to make clear that we do not trust in the power of faith. It is more accurate to say that faith does not save us; Jesus does. Faith is simply the designated way to receive the gift Jesus has purchased for us. The best image I have heard for faith is that of empty hands, open to receive what Christ offers (Francis Schaeffer).

We need to be careful in our preaching. I fear that many people have faith in faith. But faith is only as good as the object in which it is placed. A great faith in faith does little; a mustard seed sized faith in Christ does much. What matters is not the size of the faith, but the strength of the object of faith.

5. The other side of faith: repentance. Repentance is inseparable from true faith, but we largely ignore it in our preaching. In the Bible, it is often stated as an indispensable requirement for salvation (Matt. 4:17, Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30, II Cor. 7:8-10; II Pet. 3:9). It is true that faith is mentioned more often, but these verses would seem to suggest that perhaps repentance was assumed as the prerequisite to true faith. In order to trust Christ, one must first cease to trust in other gods (including the most often followed god in our society, self). It includes sorrow for sin, and recognition that there is no hope apart from Jesus.

That "about-face" in terms of who to trust and follow is repentance. It involves a total change: in attitudes (about oneself, God, values, emotions (Matt. 5:4; the abundant life begins with grieving), and actions (Luke 3:8, 10-14). Not only is it requisite for salvation, it continues to have an important part in the Christian's life, in the ongoing process of sanctification (Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:3, 19).

J. I. Packer gives a helpful alliterative description of repentance in *Rediscovering Holiness*. He says that repentance is:

* "Realistic recognition that one has disobeyed and failed God."
* "Regretful remorse at the dishonor one has done to the God one is learning to love and wanting to serve."
* "Reverent requesting of God's pardon, cleansing of conscience, and help to not lapse in the same way again."
* "Resolute renunciation of the sins in question."
* "Requisite restitution to any who have suffered material loss through one's wrongdoing."

Should we think that all these aspects of repentance are inherent in genuine saving faith? No doubt repentance will be imperfect at conversion and throughout the Christian life, but there must be some change along the lines that Packer indicates.

It is obvious that if this is repentance, it must be an ongoing part of the Christian life, for our repentance will always need to be deepened. Luther wrote, in the first of his famous 95 theses, these words: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”

There are far too few tears of repentance in our churches today, due in part to our neglect of the importance of repentance in the preaching of the gospel and in teaching believers how to grow. If revival should break out, one of the most obvious signs will be the renewal of deep, heart-breaking, repentance.

IV. The *Ordo Salutis* (order of salvation). In the history of theology, especially those who followed the Reformers, there has been a good deal of discussion of what is called the *ordo salutis*, or the order in which various aspects of salvation happen. The only explicit biblical base for this whole issue is Rom. 8:29-30, which gives a sequence of foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. Of course, we know this cannot be complete, for faith/repentance, regeneration, and sanctification must be fitted in along the way, but more by logic and implication than any explicit teaching.

While I do not want to dwell too much on the importance of the order of events itself, it does afford us a chance to reflect upon salvation from a broader viewpoint and glean some insights. It also brings us face to face with some of the most hotly disputed doctrines in all of theology.

A. The Work of God Before Time. We begin with three words that must clearly take first place in the order of salvation, for they lead us back to before the foundation of the world: foreknowledge, predestination, and election.

1. Biblical Foundations. We begin with the word "foreknowledge," (*prognosis*) which means simply to know beforehand. Despite the recent attempts to limit God's omniscience to knowledge of all past events, God's foreknowledge is firmly founded in Scripture. From the words any human is going to say to the course of human history--all is known in advance, perfectly, by God (Ps. 139:4, Dan. 2:36-45). All of predictive prophecy is evidence of God's foreknowledge. Moreover, despite the claims of open theists, complete foreknowledge does not require God to obliterate human freedom and responsibility. For example, Christ went to the cross by God's "set purpose and foreknowledge," yet the sermons in Acts hold wicked humans responsible for putting him to death (Acts 2:23).

In regard to salvation, the word foreknowledge appears in two verses pertinent to our subject. In Rom. 8:29, foreknowledge is somehow linked to predestination. In I Pet. 1:2, it is linked to election. The exact meaning of that linkage is an important question to which we will return shortly.

The second word, "predestine," (*proorizo*) is a stronger word. It means not just to know beforehand, but to determine beforehand (Acts 4:27-28). Some would claim that everything is predestined, since it happens within the sovereignty of God, but we have earlier argued that

God's causal connection is different in different events. Some events he allows, though they are contrary to his will as revealed in Scripture. Other times, he allows humans to do what their evil natures lead them to do, for in so doing he knows they will unwillingly accomplish what he desires (as in Acts 4:27-28).

In terms of the question of salvation, I would define predestination as the decision of God to glorify his name by redeeming certain sinners and conforming them to the image of his Son. It is predestination, for this is made prior to any actions of those so predestined. In this sense, its meaning is virtually equivalent to certain instances of the word "election." The three most directly relevant passages are Rom. 8:29-30, Eph. 1:5, and Eph. 1:11 (Acts 13:48 has the same idea but uses a different word). In each case, we find a link between predestination and election in the immediate context. In Rom. 8:33, the elect are the same group as the predestined (and comparing Rom. 8:29 and I Pet. 1:2, it would seem that the foreknown, predestined, and elect are all three the same group). Eph. 1:5 is preceded by Eph. 1:4, which mentions that we are elect in him (Christ). And the ideas of being chosen (elect) and being predestined are also linked in Eph. 1:11, though the word used for chosen is not the normal word.

The words foreknowledge and predestination do not occur very often, and we might be able to relegate this subject to the speculative, unimportant regions of theology, were it not for the connection of these words with election, which is an important biblical term.

The Hebrew word *bachar* (elect, choose) and its derivatives occur 198 times in the OT (see the article in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, by Harris, Archer and Waltke, v. 1, p. 100). The root idea behind the word is "to take a keen look at," implying that the choices to which it refers are not arbitrary, but carefully considered. With few exceptions, the word is used "to express that choosing which has ultimate and eternal significance."

The OT speaks often of God choosing Jerusalem as the place for his name; God also chooses kings (Saul in I Sam. 10:24; David in II Sam. 6:21). tribes (Levites to be his priests in Deut. 18:5; Judah as the tribe of David in Ps. 78:68), and individuals (Abram in Neh. 9:7; Aaron in Ps. 105:26). Above all, he chooses Israel to be "his treasured possession" (Deut. 7:6, 14:2, Ps. 135:4), "his inheritance" (Ps. 33:12). Even after he judges them and sends them into exile, he reaffirms his choice of them (Is. 14:1, 41:8-9. 43:10).

At times, election involves a task (Deut. 21:5, Is. 42:1-4). And while the election of Israel involved some responsibilities, their election was primarily to a special relationship with God; the responsibilities came as a result of that relationship. God's choice is not based on any quality in Israel (Deut. 7:7), but on his own gracious and sovereign decision. The point here is that those who try to limit the biblical meaning of election to "election to service, and not to salvation" are not entirely accurate. In the OT, the responsibilities Israel had came as a result of their election to be God's "special treasure."

In the NT, the picture is much the same. The verb *eklegomai* and the noun *eklektos* are each found 22 times. While there is some diversity of usage, the most frequent use is of God's elective activity. And election is not primarily to service. Most often, "the elect" are believers,

the people of God (Matt. 24:22, Mk. 13:20, Lk. 18:7, Rom. 8:33, Col. 3:12, I Pet. 2:9 and others). The primary purpose for which they are elected is not service, but to receive salvation (Eph. 1:4, I Thess. 1:4-5, II Thess. 2:13, II Pet. 1:10-11, possibly Matt. 22:14). The idea without the word is found in John 6:37, 44, and is implicit in the idea of adoption, which involves a choice on the part of the adopting Father.

As I mentioned earlier, this biblical material has been the center of much controversy in the history of the church. Let us examine the historic development of doctrine which grew up around these words and verses.

2. Historic Development.

a. Augustine and Pelagius. The first name in church history associated with the doctrine of election or predestination is Augustine. This issue arose in his disputes with Pelagius over the effects of the fall on human nature. This question is central to how we think of election. If we think of all humans as pleading with God, “Choose me, Choose me!” election seems monstrous. But if we see all of humanity as fleeing from God and hiding from him, election is an act of grace. Pelagius saw human will as unaffected by the fall and therefore able to obey God's commands and choose to follow God's ways. Augustine believed the fall had so enslaved human will that a special gift of grace (prevenient grace) must precede any movement toward conversion. God gives that gift, along with cooperating grace, efficacious grace and the gift of final perseverance to his chosen and elect. Ultimately, then, salvation rested not on human decisions but on the predestining choice of God. Augustine’s emphasis on the primacy of grace in salvation has been characteristic of a broad stream of the Christian tradition, including Anselm and Aquinas as well as Luther and Calvin.

b. Calvin. Despite the historic association of predestination with Calvin's name, it must be noted in all fairness that it is far from a central theme in his theology. Indeed, it is almost an appendix to the larger theme of the Christian life and arises from the question implicit in the opening words of his discussion of election: "In actual fact, the covenant of life is not preached equally among all men, and among those to whom it is preached, it does not gain the same acceptance either constantly or in equal degree." The implicit question is Why? That is the question election answers. But it is not the first nor the most important question.

The non-centrality of election can also be seen in the comparative emphasis given to various topics: nearly 50 pages simply to describe faith (which as we discussed is the presupposition of the knowledge of God, which is the sum of all the wisdom we possess and the chief subject of life). Faith is more central than election.

Justification by faith receives treatment in 8 chapters totaling more than 100 pages, compared to 4 chapters and 60 pages on election. Even the single chapter on prayer is longer than the entire treatment of election (the longest single chapter in the *Institutes*). I say this simply to correct the mistaken stereotype of Calvin. Predestination and election were much less important for him than for many later Calvinists (Beza, the Dutch Calvinists and later Scholastics). And his treatment of it is not that original and different than that of Augustine,

Luther and Zwingli. His presentation is certainly as clear and forthright as any, but he is no innovator in what he says.

Nonetheless, his formulation of election was extremely influential, and deserves our attention. I want to walk you through Calvin's exposition of election in the *Institutes*, showing how he develops it and the points he emphasizes.

(1) The necessity of dealing with election. It answers the question of why some hear, others don't; why some respond and others don't.

(2) The benefits of knowing about election: it assures us that salvation flows from God's free mercy; ignorance of it detracts from God's glory; it helps us, both humbling us and assuring us ("here is our only ground for firmness and confidence").

(3) The spirit in which to study it. Seek not to satisfy inordinate curiosity; seek what Scripture teaches alone; yet do not hesitate to say what Scripture says. If God has taught it, it is not harmful to study it. Scripture, Calvin says, may contain strong meat, but not poison.

(4) Definition of election: God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. It is a predestination to life or death (and thus double). It is founded on freely given mercy, without regard to human worth (and thus unconditional). And it flows from God's just and irreprehensible but incomprehensible judgment (thus it has no other basis or explanation). The fact that one is predestined to life is testified by call and justification. Conversely, not having the chance to hear the gospel may be a testimony to reprobation.

(5) Scriptural teaching. Calvin's chief concern in this section is to show that election in Scripture is not based on foreknowledge (Eph. 1:4, Rom. 9,11), and that it is clearly taught, not only by Paul, but also by Christ (John 6:37-39, 44-45, 17:6-9). One could add the Old Testament teaching and the implications of ideas like adoption, depravity, and divine sovereignty.

(6) Objections to election. While he devotes all of III.xxiii to this topic, he begins at the end of xxii with two further questions, then responds to five objections. We will list them as seven objections.

First objection: Election makes no sense. Why would God call all and elect only a few? Calvin's answer is, because God chooses to do so. He does not deign to reveal himself savingly to all, or give all the gift of faith (Is. 53:1). There is no cause for election or reprobation beyond God's will: "For when it is said that God hardens or shows mercy to whom he wills, men are warned by this to seek no cause outside his will." (III.xxii.11).

Second objection: Scripture teaches election, but not reprobation. Calvin realized that even among some Protestants (Melanchthon, not Luther), there was much more resistance to

reprobation than election. But he says the two go together; those God passes over he condemns. He cites Paul (Rom. 9:14ff) and Jesus (Matt. 15:13) as evidence. Don't try "anxiously to make false excuses in God's defense."

Here is one of the places where I and many others who call themselves Calvinists differ from Calvin. I see election as clearly taught, but not reprobation. I think the most helpful mental picture of election is not that of a group of people eagerly sitting and hoping that God will pick them. Rather, we should see all of humanity stampeding away from God, and God's electing hand, reaching out to restrain and effectually call some. Thus I do not see God as the cause of the condemnation of the lost in the same sense as He is the cause of the elect's salvation. I think this mental image is in keeping with biblical teaching on election, depravity and the sense of wonder and gratitude election draws forth from believers.

Third objection: Election makes God a tyrant. He predestines men to damnation without cause. Calvin responds first, that "it is very wicked merely to investigate the causes of God's will." Secondly,

> God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteous. When, therefore, one asks why God has so done, we must reply: because he has willed it. But if you proceed further to ask why he so willed, you are seeking something greater and higher than God's will, which cannot be found. (III.xxiii.2).

God is not liable to judgment and we are not competent to judge him. Further, God is just toward the reprobate, for though election to condemnation is not based on the wickedness of human nature, yet that nature deserved nothing better than death. Don't seek further reasons for God's secret decree; just marvel:

> Thou seekest reason? I tremble at the depth. Reason, thou; I will marvel. Dispute, thou; I will believe. I see the depth; I do not reach the bottom. Paul rested, for he found wonder" (III. xxiii.5).

Fourth objection: Election takes guilt and responsibility away from man. If all is predestined anyway, how can man be responsible? Here Calvin has some difficulty for he believes the Bible teaches God's foreordination or predestination of all things, even of sinners to sin:

> The decree is dreadful indeed, I confess. Yet no one can deny that God foreknew what end man was to have before he created him, and consequently foreknew because he so ordained by his decree (III.xxiii.7).

Man's wickedness, even though foreordained by God, is justly judged by God, even if we don't see its justice. Calvin says, "man falls according as God's providence ordains, but he falls by his own fault." Though Calvin does not cite it here, this seems very similar to the objection Paul poses in Rom. 9:19, an objection to which Paul gives as little answer as Calvin (vv. 20-24).

Fifth objection: Election leads to the view that God shows partiality toward persons. This is a misunderstanding of election; it has no basis whatsoever in the person. God judges all guilty, then forgives some, not for anything in them, but from His own freedom.

Sixth objection: Election destroys all zeal for an upright life. No, the effect of election is to humble us, and the goal of election is holiness of life.

Seventh objection: Election makes all admonitions meaningless. The response is that it didn't have that effect in Paul's life, teaching, and ministry, nor did it stop the apostles or later leaders of the church from warning and admonishing, for God's predestination includes the means he uses as well as the end result.

A further objection could be that this goes against the freedom of man's will, but Calvin had already argued against the existence of a libertarian freedom of will and answered objections against his view of total depravity (II.i-v). Man is free in the sense that he sins willingly, rather than by compulsion, but that is not the type of free will claimed by Calvin's opponents. Calvin says the will, as a result of the fall, "was so bound to wicked desires that it cannot strive after the right" (II, ii, 12). Without grace we can do nothing.

Whether or not Calvin was right or not, he certainly was aware of the difficulties and objections that could be put to his understanding of Scripture. Those who disagree with him should at least do him the courtesy of considering his responses before they reject his interpretation.

c. Arminius and the Synod of Dort. In 1559, Calvin opened the Geneva Academy. Many refugees ended up studying there, among them a number from Holland, and Calvinist theology became influential in Holland. One of those who had studied at Geneva under Calvin's chosen successor, Theodore Beza, was Jacob Arminius. Some years later, he began a personal study of Romans and church history in order to defend Calvinism against the attacks of some who disagreed with its teachings. To his surprise, he found his study led him away from Calvinism, and began to teach contrary to Calvin on a number of points, especially election. He gathered a number of followers and sparked a great controversy in the Dutch Reformed Church.

The controversy had political as well as theological ramifications. The Reformed faith was embraced by Dutch patriots at least partially as a reaction to the Catholicism of Spain, the oppressor of the Netherlands. Any opposition to Reformed theology was often seen as a covert movement back toward Catholicism, and so aroused political as well as theological opposition.

Arminius died in 1609, but the controversy continued until 1619, when the church convened a group of theologians to debate matters. The Synod of Dort affirmed Calvinistic theology in the famous five points (which were in fact responses to the claims of the "Remonstrants," or Arminians): 1. Total depravity; 2. Unconditional election; 3. Limited atonement; 4. Irresistible grace; and 5. Perseverance of the saints.

We need to look a bit more closely at Arminius's view of election. He did not deny that God elected persons; it was too obviously in Scripture. But he affirmed that God's election of an individual is based on, or conditioned by, God's foreknowledge of the fact that the individual, by an act of his own free will, will respond positively to the gospel of Christ. He noted that foreknowledge is linked with predestination in Rom. 8:29 and with election in I Pet. 1:2. Even those who accepted total depravity could accept this view of election by positing a universal gift of prevenient grace that restored the ability of free will to choose for Christ.

The Calvinist response (which had been anticipated by Calvin) was an affirmation of unconditional election. They saw two problems with the Arminian interpretation of foreknowledge. First of all, the idea that foreknowledge is foreknowledge of how a person will respond to the gospel does not fit the use of foreknowledge in the verses cited. In Rom. 8:29, foreknowledge does not refer to what God foreknew, but <u>whom</u>. A better interpretation sees foreknowledge as similar to fore-love (for in Hebrew thought, knowing and loving were closely related; see Gen. 4:1) God decided beforehand to set his love on certain persons; those whom he foreknew, in this sense, were predestined, called, justified and glorified. Election is therefore not conditioned by foreknowledge of any decision a human will make; foreknowledge is itself the choice of God to set his love on certain persons, for reasons that lie hidden within the unsearchable will of God.

A second problem with the Arminian view is that it empties election of all meaning, and stands it on its head. If Arminius is correct, in essence divine election is human decision, for in election God is just ratifying the decision of a human. God does nothing for the elect that he does not also do for the non-elect. What then is election? It would seem a strange word to use for something that has no importance, and is completely out of keeping with the active meaning of election elsewhere in both the NT and OT.

d. In Baptist history, you know that the first Baptists (John Smyth and Thomas Helwys) spent some time in Holland, fleeing persecution in England. While there (during the height of the controversy over the views of Arminius), it seems likely that they were influenced by Arminius, and developed into General Baptists. A few years later, a second branch of Baptists developed with much more Calvinistic views. These two groups, the General Baptists and Particular Baptists, derived their names from their positions on the extent of the atonement, but differed on election, grace and perseverance as well.

Of these two groups, the Particular Baptists have been the strongest historically, especially in North America. In the mid-19th century, Regular (Calvinistic) Baptists outnumbered Free Will (Arminian) Baptists more than 10 to 1, and even the earlier, Separate Baptists combined a basically Calvinistic theology with a passion for evangelism. Since 1900, Southern Baptist positions on election have been changing, and today some Baptists react strongly against Calvinstic ideas of election and predestination, fearing they have a chilling effect on missions and evangelism. However, such a view is neither necessitated by Calvinistic theology nor reflected in Baptist history, and our confessions of faith allow for both Arminian and Calvinistic interpretations on most issues (though not on the issue of security or perseverance).

The reasons behind Baptist movement away from Calvinistic theology in the late 19th and 20th centuries is an interesting study. While individuals like Wesley and Finney had some role, I think the most important factor was the fact that the Calvinistic doctrine of human depravity, which makes election and predestination necessary, conflicted with more optimistic American and Enlightenment ideas of human nature. American culture emphasized the power of humans to determine their own destiny, and that all persons have some good in them. Calvinistic insistence on total depravity and the necessity of dependence on God sounded harsh and strange to many American ears.

Calvinistic theology has remained strong among Baptist theologians (C. H. Spurgeon, A. H. Strong, down to Millard Erickson) but has been ignored, weakened, or denied by many popular pastors and writers (Herschel Hobbs, for example).

e. One final individual whose formulation of election we should mention is Karl Barth. He focuses the doctrine of election on Christ, as both the electing God and the elect man. In the election of Christ is included the election of a community (the church) which exists to summon the world to Christ. Yet even those outside the church are not rejected. They too are elect in Christ; they simply do not know it. The church's task is not to call people to accept the gospel or face the wrath of God. It is to tell all the world that they are elect in Christ; any human decision to reject God is itself rejected by God. He will not take no for an answer. Election is God's decision that, in Christ, he is for all of us (Rom. 8:31; Barth changes the "us" of believers to "all"). Election shows that God has freely chosen to be determined and governed by immutable grace (see G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*).

Despite some positive aspects of this treatment, and the comfortable position it allows, it cannot be acceptable, for it leads inescapably to universalism, and ignores the numerous verses that speak of the reality of lostness and danger to those who do reject Christ.

3. Theological Formulation. We may draw together and summarize the central elements in a formulation of election in the form of six affirmations:

a. Election is the decision of God to redeem a certain specific group (the "those" of Rom. 8:29) and conform them to the image of Christ. Thus, it is portrayed in connection to salvation and not just to service.

b. Election is placed "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4), and is virtually synonymous with predestination, in the area of salvation.

c. Election is unconditional. That means that it is not based on God's foreknowledge of how one will respond to Christ, but is a free and gracious decision determined by God's will alone.

Despite the objections to this view by Ken Keathley, and his preference for what he calls concurrence or congruism, my understanding of unconditional election does not entirely fit his description of it (see 708-716) and thus is not subject to his objections. I do not see what he calls

decretal theology or supralapsarianism as essential to unconditional election, and note that he sees the Amyraldinan modifications of Calvinism as having “been adopted by a sizable percentage of Calvinists” (716). Yet, even with these modifications, I think it best to call my view unconditional election due to the severe biblical deficiencies of the conditional view. Even Keathley says “in the end some type of unconditional choice on the part of God has to be acknowledged” (718).

At the same time, I think it is important to clarify what unconditional election does not imply. In fact, I can affirm all five of the corollaries Keathley associates with his view of congruism (see 722): (1) that salvation is a sovereign work of God from beginning to end, (2) that God genuinely desires the salvation of all (I affirm two wills in God in regard to salvation, as in regard to providence), (3) that God saves the elect but only permits the damnation of unbelievers (single rather than double election), (4) that each person has the freedom to choose or reject salvation (I do want to strongly affirm human responsibility, and avoid the language of “cannot” in regard to lost persons and the gospel), and (5) that election centers on Jesus Christ (see f. below). I think none of these are negated by a proper understanding of unconditional election.

d. A biblical understanding of election leads to awed worship and adoration of God's grace (as in Rom. 8:31-39 and Eph. 1:3-14), not to questioning the love or justice of God. If this is not our response, we do not yet have a biblical understanding.

e. Election is not symmetrical. By that, I mean that while election to salvation is clearly taught in Scripture, election to condemnation (reprobation) is not. Some believe that it is logically implied in the concept of election, but Scripture places the reason and responsibility for condemnation upon humans, who refuse to believe and be saved (Matt. 23:37, II Pet. 3:9). In other words, I affirm single election or predestination, not double.

f. Election is "in Christ." That is, he serves as the mirror in which one can see his election. If you are in Christ, you are elect! In this way, election does not lead to uncertainty and fear, but security and confidence.

4. Practical Applications of the Doctrine of Election. I add this point to underscore the fact that election should lead to more confidence in evangelism, and not to undermine in any way the necessity of proclaiming the gospel to all. George Whitefield, William Carey and C. H. Spurgeon were all convinced Calvinists on the doctrine of election, yet all were zealous evangelists, because they knew God was working and would use their preaching and teaching as the means by which he would draw some of the elect to faith in Christ.

It is true that in the past, some have gone beyond Calvin to hyper-Calvinism, which avoids offering gospel invitations for fear of inviting the non-elect. A more proper view understands that God's election can involve the appointed means, as well as the eventual result.

One other practical application of election is in the area of assurance of salvation (or perseverance, to use the Calvinist term). Election is the strongest support I know of for

perseverance. It affirms God's loving care, which never ends. I may doubt, but he always remains true to himself (II Tim. 2:13.)

Some say election has the potential to cause a split in Baptist ranks today. I think it should not, and hope it does not. As a model for what is most crucial to maintain and how we may dialog with others, I offer this example of a conversation between Charles Simeon, a Calvinist, and John Wesley, an Arminian (as reported by Simeon, and printed in J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 13-14):

> '"Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before I consent to begin the combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions. . . . Pray, Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it into your heart?" "Yes," says the veteran, "I do indeed." "And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?" "Yes, solely through Christ," "But, Sir, supposing you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works?" "No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last." "Allowing, then, that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power?" "No." "What, then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother's arms?" "Yes, altogether." "And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto His heavenly kingdom?" "Yes, I have no hope but in Him." "Then, Sir, with your leave I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it; and therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree."'

I believe this same spirit was reflected in the debate between Paige Patterson and Al Mohler at the June, 2006 SBC meeting, and can be seen in most of the sessions of the Building Bridges conference in November, 2007 at Ridgecrest, and should govern the ongoing conversations about these matters among fellow Christians and fellow Southern Baptists.

B. The Work of God at Conversion. Many things happen simultaneously at the moment of conversion. The individual repents and places faith in Christ; she is forgiven, justified, regenerated, baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. She is adopted by God the Father and indwelt by God the Spirit. She begins her life of faith as an active follower of Christ. We could consider these aspects and others. But we have already considered the importance of faith and

repentance; we will consider the matter of the Spirit later. In this section we want to concentrate on three items:

1. Calling. We mention this aspect of conversion only because it is in the list in Rom. 8:29-30. This passage is the only place I know of in Scripture where "calling" is used in this sense though Christians are often spoken of as “called” (Rom. 1:6; I Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:6; and others). We often speak of the universal call of the gospel, as it calls all people to come to Christ, but the calling in Rom. 8:29-30 is an effectual call, for it results in the salvation of all those called in this manner. The same idea is present in John 6:37, but the word "calling" is not used.

I think we must interpret "calling" as a work of the Spirit that draws one to salvation. It could include conviction of sin (John 16:8-11), the sense of need for forgiveness and a Savior, and the motivation to respond to the gospel. But these are all implications; the only biblical affirmation we have is that those predestined are called; and those called are also justified.

2. Regeneration. The concept of regeneration presupposes that something is wrong in human nature. It presupposes that humans exist in a state of spiritual death (Eph. 2:1), a state in which they are at enmity with God (Rom. 8:7). What is needed is not a small modification, but a new birth, and a new life (John 10:10).

The Bible describes the idea of regeneration in a variety of ways. The word "regeneration" in reference to salvation appears only in Titus 3:5, but the idea of a new birth or being born again is the same concept, and it is found several times (John 3:1-10, James 1:18, I Pet. 1:3, 23). Receiving a new spirit or a new heart or being made a new creature has the same basic meaning (Ezek. 36:25-27, II Cor. 5:17). When Paul says God "made us alive in Christ" (Eph. 2:5), he is reflecting the same concept.

It would seem that regeneration is a definite act; it happens and is completed. But it is a supernatural act, and thus is the work of the Spirit (Titus 3:5), working with the word (James 1:18). This new birth will lead to a new life, one in which the new nature that has been born will war against the old nature until the consummation, and the final destruction of the old nature (Gal. 5:17-24).

There is some debate as to whether faith precedes regeneration or follows from it. Keathley takes the former, but I see little power in his objections. I think our difference is that he equates regeneration and conversion, where I see regeneration as one aspect of conversion. It seems much more likely to me that regeneration is necessary to enable one to believe.

3. Justification. Regeneration attends to our need for life; justification speaks to our need for pardon and right standing before the Judge of all the earth. We know in our hearts that we are horribly guilty. Yet the amazing news of the Bible is that God justifies the ungodly! How can this be? It is the miracle of justification.

Normally, we begin with biblical foundations, and then look at history. But in this case, I think we will understand the power of what Scripture says if we see it against the background of the historical context of the Reformation.

a. The historical background of the Reformation. The doctrine of justification had really received little attention from theologians in the first 1500 years of the church. There was no official statement of the Roman Catholic Church until the Council of Trent, which met to respond to Luther long after the Reformation was well underway. However, the general understanding of justification was that it was the process of becoming just (or righteous, which comes from the same Greek root). Sin was seen as sickness, and justification was the process of getting well.

In theory, this process depended on grace. It began with infant baptism, which gave one an initial infusion of grace and put one on the road to health. Continuing to partake of the sacraments gave further infusions of grace, but the grace received through the sacraments was never enough to finish the process. And, at times, receiving the sacramental grace depended on the extent of one's memory and the purity of one's contrition (the sacrament of confession and penance).

In spite of all the varieties of grace expounded in Catholic theology (prevenient grace, cooperating grace, actual grace), receiving the type of grace needed to really become just was a matter of merit. The position generally accepted by the church at the time of Luther was that of Gabriel Biel, who said that God would give grace to those who did the best they could. God would recognize their efforts, grant them further grace so they could do further good works, and so finally attain to justification.

This whole system was torture to Luther. He practiced every sacrament more rigorously than others, and yet found no comfort for his soul. And the dictum of Biel drove him crazy. Who could know if they had done their best? Surely they could have done something more.

What finally released Luther from his torture was a rediscovery of the doctrine of justification. The key for him (as for Augustine, John Wesley, Karl Barth, and many others) was found in the book of Romans:

> I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and nothing stood in my way but that one expression, "the righteousness of God," because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous. I did not love the just God, who punishes sinners; on the contrary, I hated him. Night and day I pondered, until at last . . . I began to understand that "the righteousness of God" is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to have been reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.

Luther's discovery was the doctrine of justification by grace, a grace received not through sacraments but solely by faith, and a righteousness from God imputed to us, again, solely by

faith in him. Justification was not becoming righteous in ourselves, but being declared righteous in God's court by virtue of Christ's imputed righteousness. Was Luther's understanding right?

b. The biblical meaning of justification. In Scripture, the words "justice," "righteous," and "justify" all come from the same stem. They are words from the legal system, and relate to one's relationship to the law, the standard of what is right and just. For example, in Deut. 25:1, the just judge is to justify the innocent and condemn the guilty. Justification here does not make the innocent person to be or become innocent; it simply declares what is the case, what his status is before the court. The idea is the same in Prov. 17:15 and Is. 43:25; to justify is to declare the one in the right innocent.

In the NT, Luke 7:29 uses the word in a declarative sense. The people did not make God just or in the right; they "acknowledged that God's way was right." Luke 16:15 is similar, but Rom. 3:24 is the key verse. Here too it is hard to see "justify" in the sense of becoming righteous. Rom. 3:24 speaks of it as an accomplished fact, and refers to acknowledged sinners as those who are justified. Rom. 4:5 even says God justifies the wicked! The only idea that fits is that justification refers to an event, in which one is declared "not guilty," or in right relationship with the court.

The Catholic Church objected that this was to practice a legal fiction, pretending someone was righteous when they were not, and to make God a liar, to pronounce one just if they were not in fact just (i.e., they had not been personally changed). Luther could make two scriptural responses. First is that it is Christ's death that makes it more than fiction. It allows a just God to justly justify sinners (Rom. 3:26). The second response is that the righteousness we receive from Christ is indeed imputed, but our union with him is so real that it is not external to us any more. Our union is real, and so is the righteousness we receive from him--imputed, but real and not external to us (I Cor. 1:30, II Cor. 5:21, Phil 3.9).

c. Theological summary of justification.

(1) Justify means to declare just, not to become just. It is not a process, but an act of God.

(2) The basis for justification is not our sanctity and righteousness, not our good works, not even our faith. The basis is the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us.

(3) The condition of justification is faith. It is the appointed means of receiving the righteousness of Christ.

(4) The result of justification is peace with God, both objective and subjective. This peace meant so much to Luther and others who followed him that they would die rather than live again in agony and fear. What they could not find in the sacraments, or in their best works, they found in the knowledge of justification by faith.

d. The relationship between justification and sanctification. Part of the

response to the Catholic charge that justification by faith alone amounted to a legal fiction is to properly relate justification and sanctification, with the former seen as a completed act and the latter seen as an ongoing process in the Christian life. Recently, David Peterson (*Possessed by God*) has argued strongly that sanctification is an initial act and not a process in the Christian life. While he makes a valid corrective, I think he overstates his case. We still can helpfully and biblically contrast justification as act and sanctification as process.

There are two errors to avoid in relating these two aspects of salvation. The first error is to separate them completely. This error results in cheap grace, salvation without a commitment to follow Christ. In practice, this is evangelism which does not call on people to count the cost, evangelism which is satisfied with decisions rather than disciples, evangelism without taking the responsibility to follow up those who respond. But as we have already said numerous times, in the biblical idea of salvation, new birth is always followed by new life. In other terms, justification is always followed by sanctification. To separate them completely is to invite more of the nominal Christianity that already plagues our churches.

The second error is to make no distinction between justification and sanctification. This error leads to different problems in different groups.

Catholics historically have tended to confuse the two and require sanctification prior to any hope for justification, for they saw justification as requiring one to be truly, personally just (or righteous). Still today many Catholics object to justification by faith on the grounds that it does not change the one justified. But the idea that one must be truly just (sanctified) to be justified breeds insecurity, fear, and can lead one to seek salvation in good works rather than Christ.

Among Pentecostals, the crisis model of sanctification that sees sanctification as one experience leads some to exclude as non-Christians or at best second-class Christians those who haven't had the experience that marks one as sanctified. This error even reaches into some from the holiness church tradition (Nazarenes, for instance), who believe that salvation is somehow incomplete without sanctification, which is usually very fuzzily defined.

Both these problems relate to the problem that this error most often leads to in evangelical churches. It is legalism. It is the idea, subtle or explicit, that unless you have reached this level of growth, unless you avoid this practice, unless you measure up on this checklist, you aren't really saved. This error ends up adding human requirements to the gospel requirements for salvation. It works by fear and feeds pride in one's own accomplishments, rather than focusing on what Christ has done for us.

The solution to both errors is to relate sanctification and justification in a way that adequately links them and adequately distinguishes them. We may link them by saying that though they are distinguishable in thought and may develop at different rates in different individuals, they can never be completely separated in practice. Justification always leads to a process of sanctification, beginning at the moment of justification, and sanctification always presupposes and builds upon the foundation of assured justification.

We may distinguish them in the following ways:

Justification is the work of Christ for us; sanctification is the work of Christ in us. Justification is the act in which God declares us just; sanctification is the process in which God makes that declaration an experiential reality. Justification liberates us from the penalty of sin; sanctification liberates us from the power of sin. The most important distinction is the simplest: justification is an act, accomplished once and for all, that gives a foundation of assurance to the Christian life. Sanctification is a continual process, with ups and downs (but an overall upward trend), and progresses at different speeds.

Thus, we cannot add human requirements to those in Scripture, but Scripture does call us to know the reality of one's profession by the fruit, and challenges us to examine ourselves. Sanctification provides challenge and motivation in the Christian life, but without resorting to legalism or undermining legitimate assurance of salvation. And assurance of salvation, while built initially on justification, is strengthened by evidence of sanctification (see I John).

C. The Work of God Throughout the Christian Life. While there are several words we could use to describe the process of growth or maturation that goes on in the Christian life, we will use sanctification as an umbrella term for the work of God throughout the Christian life.

1. Old Testament Background. While sanctification is primarily a New Testament doctrine, its conceptual and theological background is found in the Old Testament. The word holy (*qadosh*) in its noun, verb, and adjective forms is found more than 700 times in the Old Testament. It is used of God in two ways. It denotes God in his separateness or transcendence (Is. 6:1-4), and it is used for God in his moral purity (Hab. 1:12-13). In fact, one aspect of God's transcendence or separateness is his total moral purity.

When applied to people, we find both senses of the word "holy" utilized. By God's sovereign choice and redeeming action, Israel became a "holy nation" (Ex. 19:6, Deut. 7:6), set apart from other nations. This calling carried with it the responsibility to be holy, in both a ritual and moral sense.

There are at least three important implications from this Old Testament background that seem important for the New Testament teaching. First, sanctification is primarily God's action. He set apart Israel for himself, chose Jerusalem as his holy city, and the priests as his holy servants. Second, the idea of being set apart seems central. Third, the idea of moral purity comes in as the response to being set apart. Those set apart must live with different values, beliefs and practices than the world around them.

2. New Testament Teaching. The New Testament term for sanctification is *hagiasmos*, and is found relatively infrequently (10 times, sometimes translated "holiness"). But in its verbal form, *hagiazo*, or "sanctify," it is found 28 times, and as an adjective, *hagios*, or "holy," it is found 233 times, so it is an important New Testament term. But the pattern of usage is strikingly different than that in the Old Testament. Whereas holy is often used in the Old

Testament to describe God (God is called “the Holy One of Israel” 29 times in Isaiah), and used only three times to describe God’s Spirit, in the New Testament holy is almost never used for God the Father or even Christ the Son, but is used in association with God the Spirit 92 times, such that we almost think Holy is the Spirit’s first name. Why such a dramatic change? I think there are several factors.

First, in the coming of Christ, God’s transcendence was balanced by his immanence. God is still holy and set apart, but he has also become one of us, and lived our life among us. He is Immanuel. Thus, the New Testament does not need to emphasize the holiness of God as the Old Testament did. That point had been made and was now being balanced by another emphasis. Second, God’s Spirit is God, God powerfully active in human affairs. To say God’s Spirit is holy in no way questions, but rather affirms God’s holiness. Third, I think the New Testament pattern of usage hints at the fact that it is by means of the Holy Spirit that God consecrates or sanctifies people in the New Testament era. Upon Jesus’ glorification, the Spirit was poured out and became fully active on earth, indwelling people to make them holy. This hint is strengthened by the fact that the second most prominent usage for the word holy in the New Testament is for believers, who are called “holy ones” or “saints” 62 times. All believers are holy because they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

But does New Testament teaching justify seeing sanctification as the work of God that continues throughout the Christian life? Here we must acknowledge that there are two major ways in which the words associated with sanctification are used in the New Testament, parallel to the twofold meaning of holy in the Old Testament.

In one sense, holiness or sanctification is something that can be predicated of all believers simply because they are believers. There is a positional or initial or definitive sanctification given to all believers at the moment of conversion, when they are set apart from worldly pursuits, and set apart for God's purposes. The second sense of holiness or sanctification relates to moral purity. In this sense, sanctification is seen as the process of growth in holiness that continues throughout the Christian life.

Most discussions of sanctification focus on the second sense, and see the first sense of sanctification as closely related to justification. Historically, evangelical theologians since Calvin have emphasized that sanctification is a process, and justification is a definitive status, in reaction to Catholic teaching which had seen justification as a process. But David Peterson, in *Possessed by God*, argues that emphasizing the idea of sanctification as the process of moral growth completely misses the New Testament emphasis. While he does not deny that the idea of moral transformation is involved in sanctification, he believes the overwhelming use of sanctification in the New Testament refers to what happens to all believers at conversion, and he sees a danger when New Testament teaching is distorted:

> History shows that, when the terminology of sanctification is simply used to describe everything that happens to us after conversion, the definitive emphasis of the New Testament is soon obscured. The call to ‘be holy’ can so easily degenerate into a moralistic and perfectionist programme for believers to pursue. (137)

Peterson's work caused me to go back and work through the New Testament usage of sanctify, sanctification, and related words and reevaluate my understanding. I agree with Peterson that there is a substantial emphasis on definitive sanctification. For example, one of the major categories of usage of these terms is for the status of believers in Christ. This idea is implied in the repeated designation of believers as "saints," or "holy ones" (Rom. 1:7, I Cor. 1:2). This is made clear by two further references in I Corinthians (1:30 and 6:11). Though far from morally pure, these believers are described as already sanctified in Christ. To be sure, these saints are also called to live out their saintliness in holy lives, but they start from a status and identity achieved for them by Christ. They are called to live like what they are.

However, a second cluster of usages seems to combine both definitive and progressive aspects of sanctification. I see this in the connection of sanctification to the work of Christ on the cross (see John 17:19, Heb. 2:11; 9:13-14; 10:10; 10:29; 13:12). This connection seems to associate sanctification with conversion, and would imply definitive sanctification. But Heb. 2:11 and 10:14 present an interesting question. Both seem to relate sanctification to Christ's suffering, but both use the present participle ("being made holy"), which could imply a process. Though Peterson sees the participial usage as too general to draw a conclusion, I think it at least opens the door to the idea of sanctification as based on Christ's work on the cross, but including an ongoing process of growth in appropriating and realizing all that Christ's death accomplished.

The process idea also is found in a number of verses that discuss the various means by which sanctification is accomplished. Most of these means refer to believers in a passive way; that is, they are the objects of sanctification. However, in a few cases, believers are called to participate in the process. For example, II Thess. 2:13 and Acts 26:18 link sanctification and faith. Faith is not a human work, but it is a human response that is more than just a one-time act. Indeed, faith is the way we receive Christ and all his benefits, including the blessing of sanctification.

An even clearer example of sanctification as involving a process of growth is Heb. 12:14, which calls on us to "make every effort . . . to be holy," and adds the warning, "without holiness (*hagiasmos)* no one will see the Lord." On the one hand, *hagiasmos* is God's gift to every believer in Christ (I Cor. 1:2, 30); on the other hand, holiness is the aim of God's disciplinary process (Heb. 12:10), and the imperative call of Heb. 12:14.

Does this mean that a believer must reach a certain level in the process of spiritual growth to be insured of salvation and seeing the Lord? The only level of holiness that fits one to see the Lord is total holiness. Therefore, the process of sanctification must be completed before one can see the Lord. In one sense, the completion of the process of sanctification is anticipated by the gift we receive in justification (the imputed righteousness of Christ); in a final sense, the completion of sanctification looks to glorification to finish the process. In the meantime, we are to show forth the reality of our faith by pursuing that which is both already given to us and not yet fully manifested in our lives.

Other verses connect sanctification with the process of becoming or remaining morally

pure. II Tim. 2:21 promises that those who cleanse themselves from that which is common or ignoble will be "made holy." This text may conceivably have some relationship to the initial moment of conversion, but we commonly teach that no one must cleanse themselves first in order to receive God's gift. Perhaps the cleansing mentioned here is simply repentance, or the recognition that receiving salvation will mean a transformation from ignoble to noble purposes. But I think this verse is most naturally interpreted as referring to the ongoing process in the Christian life as God convicts us about purposes in our lives that must go. As they do, God works in us holiness.

Finally, in Rom. 6:19, 22 holiness (*hagiasmos*) is described as the fruit of obedience. Both verses seem to see obedience and presumably, growth in holiness, as ongoing matters. Verse 19 contrasts the course of one's previous life as slavery to "ever-increasing wickedness" with the present course of slavery to righteousness; sanctification is the destination or, in v. 22, the benefit resulting from such a life. Yet sanctification is not just a future blessing. Verse 22 emphasizes the present benefit of a life of righteousness, again hinting at the nature of sanctification in these verses as a process more than a state. C. E. B. Cranfield, in his two volume commentary on Romans states, "In spite of some opinions to the contrary, the word [*hagiasmos*], as used by Paul, indicates a process rather than a state".

My conclusion is that while Peterson has a point, and while sanctification does need to be more widely recognized as another way of speaking about conversion, and dealing with a status we are given at conversion, still it is not mistaken or biblically incorrect to also speak of sanctification as a process. As in many other areas of theology, this is an example of the already/not yet tension. We are <u>already</u> sanctified; God has set us apart for his own purposes. But we do <u>not yet</u> always live that way. But the tension will not last forever. In the famous analogy of Oscar Cullman, we live between D-day and V-day. There are still many battles to fight, but the final outcome is no longer in doubt.

3. Differing models of sanctification. While sanctification has been widely used among Protestants as an umbrella term for the process of Christian growth, a variety of differences have led to the development of numerous models of how sanctification occurs. Theologians have differed as to the goal of sanctification (is it primarily a matter of character or activity? enjoying God or serving God?), the means of sanctification (does it come via contemplation, surrender to the Spirit, or mortification of the flesh?), the degree of success we may expect to experience in this life in sanctification (can we reach Christian perfection or entire sanctification, perhaps via the baptism of the Spirit?) and the nature of sanctification (is it primarily a crisis event or a process?). The answers given to these questions have produced a number of models.

a. *The contemplative model* has been central to numerous important movements, among them monasticism, mysticism, and some elements of Puritanism. In monasticism, sanctification was seen in terms of detachment from the world and the things of the world, and devotion to the knowledge of God. Mystical thought sought to move through the stages of purgation and illumination to union with God.

Among Protestants, something of the contemplative model is found in the thought of Jonathan Edwards. In a 1733 sermon called "A Divine and Supernatural Light," he reflected on the heart of Christian experience. He saw the Holy Spirit as operating within believers to give them the light or spiritual sense to apprehend the beauty and excellency of the things of God. This intimate, personal, supra-rational knowledge of God and his beauty had the power to produce true holiness of life, which Edwards saw happen among his people during the Awakening. Some of Edwards' insights have been carried into the contemporary context by people like John Piper and J. I. Packer, both of whom see knowing God as the key to a sanctified life.

b. *The traditional model* in Catholic thought since Aquinas has seen holiness as the cultivation of virtues. From Plato and Aristotle they adopted the virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice. These they called natural or cardinal virtues; from Scripture they drew the three so called theological virtues of faith, hope and love (I Cor. 13:13). These virtues developed as a result of grace, which is received via the sacraments. This is why the sacraments are central to the spiritual life and health of a Catholic.

c. A distinctive model of sanctification was developed by John Wesley called *entire sanctification or Christian perfection.* It should not be seen as a static state of absolute perfection, but as a relative and dynamic perfection, in which the will's bent to sinning has been cleansed and the heart's orientation has been changed, so that one lives a life of love toward God, free from conscious or deliberate sin. It is not a state from which one cannot fall, but is a state from which one should continue to progress. It is not accomplished by personal discipline or ascetic practices, but is the fruit of faith and the work of God the Holy Spirit in the believer.

d. Closely related historically is the *Pentecostal model* of sanctification. They took Wesley's idea of entire sanctification, saw it as a second work of grace, identified it with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, manifested by the gift of tongues, and leading to a transformed Christian life. We will examine the idea of the baptism of the Spirit more fully under our discussion of pneumatology, but it is central to the Pentecostal model of sanctification.

e. Still another model takes its name from the town of *Keswick* in England, where an annual conference has been held every year since 1875. The first such meting was called a "Convention for the Promotion of Practical Holiness," and that has been the emphasis of this model. This concern is also shared by many who advocate what they call the victorious Christian life, the Spirit filled life, or even the normal Christian life. The pattern for leading people to victory in the Keswick conventions was to teach over a five day period on five key topics: sin, God's provision in union with Christ, consecration or absolute surrender, the filling of the Spirit, and service, especially missions. The path to sanctification is the same as the path to justification: faith. Unbelief consists in active rebellion to God, passive drift from God, or lack of trust in God (163-64). The solution is a renewal of faith. This renewal of faith comes in an experience of surrender, usually seen as a crisis event. This is not seen as a second blessing, but simply an appropriation of what was available all along. Moreover, this one experience is not necessarily final. As often as there is drift or rebellion, there may need to be further experiences

of renewal along the way.

f. *The Reformed model* includes much that is common to other views, but two emphases seem to distinguish this perspective. The first is a concern for theological precision. The Reformed model strives to articulate the proper relationship between justification and sanctification. Since it originated in conflict with the Catholic idea of justification as a process of growth, Reformed theology has typically stressed justification as a declaratory act and sanctification as an ongoing process that builds upon the assurance given in justification. The second distinguishing emphasis in the Reformed model is seeing sanctification as involving an ongoing warfare. This expectation of conflict is seen in Calvin's description of the Christian life. His discussion of the Christian life is preceded by the acknowledgment that there will be struggle and imperfection. For example, he speaks of the Christian life as a goal "toward which we should strive and struggle" and sees "the sum of the Christian life [as] the denial of ourselves" (*Institutes*, III.vi.5; III.vii).

The Puritans developed their theology around the twin practices of vivification and mortification. Vivification is the positive process of cultivating the new life through consistent use of the means of grace, and is common to most teaching on sanctification. Mortification of sin, the negative practice of putting sin and the old man to death, is an emphasis largely limited to the Puritans, though the language and practice is thoroughly biblical (see Gal. 2:20; 5:24; Col. 3:5). It involves the humility necessary to see our sin, the knowledge of God and his holiness to abhor and detest our sin, and the wisdom to come before God in prayer to seek deliverance from sin. What I find most striking in the Puritan teaching is the seriousness with which they take this business of mortification of sin. I see little evidence that most Christians today are as aware of the deeply embedded nature of sin in their lives, are as distressed over sin in their hearts, or are as committed to the eradication of sin in their lives. Puritans did not expect to become perfect, but they had a "drumbeat stress on detecting, resisting and overcoming sin's downdrag" (Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, 109). This is not to omit the joy and peace in the Christian life, which they also taught. But the humility, awareness of sin's horror, and commitment to growth in holiness involved in their practice of mortification of sin is directly related to the joy and depth of their communion with God. Both their practice of mortification and their depth of communion seem missing in contemporary American Christianity.

These different models boil down to basically two approaches that need our examination: crisis or process. Several of the models see a crisis event as playing an important role in sanctification. It may be called the baptism of the Holy Spirit, entire sanctification, or complete surrender, but the idea is the same. After this single, overwhelming experience, you are sanctified, and enter into a new level of Christian living that is relatively trouble free or at least involves consistent victory.

Sometimes this approach lies behind the claim that this seminar, this spiritual discipline, this practice will cure all your spiritual problems. In fact, if anyone offers you the secret of living the Christian life, they probably don't have it. I believe there is far more than one secret involved. Becoming a Christian involves giving all that you are to Christ; but you pay out that commitment one decision at a time (like paying $10,000 one quarter at a time). I do not think

there is any "one step to solve all your problems" package out there. Thus, I am not satisfied with a crisis event approach to sanctification. I think it promises more than it can deliver, and thus leads to disillusionment and despair.

The second approach emphasizes sanctification as a process. John Wesley's original version of Christian perfection, as well as some in the Keswick tradition, include this idea, but it is most clearly seen in the Reformed or Puritan approach. It looks something like a graph of the stock market, with ups and downs, but a generally upward trend. It allows for, not just one, but many crisis experiences, in which Christian growth and maturity show a marked jump, even to a new level. But one never reaches a level from which there cannot be decline, danger or conflict, nor from which there is no possibility of further growth. This model seems more realistic, more biblical, and healthier spiritually.

4. Hindrances to sanctification. Since the human role in sanctification center on faith, anything that sparks unbelief will hinder sanctification. Unfortunately, there is an evil trinity of the world, the flesh and the devil organized in opposition to us. They seek to utilize or orchestrate events to tempt us to unbelief. The latter two members of the evil trinity are discussed in Christian Theology I, and the world was discussed earlier in this course. But there are also situations in our lives, not initiated by any one of these three, that can become hindrances if we do not respond rightly.

For example, they seek to exploit the opening presented when we face unexpected surprises. Few walk far in the Christian life before they discover that God does not always act as we expect. There are unexpected surprises. Sometimes there are gracious gifts beyond what we dared to ask, such as prayers answered before we prayed them, and guidance that is clear and unmistakable. But there are also unpleasant unexpected surprises.

For example, the problem of pain will rear its head. Either you or someone you know and love will suffer a tragedy, and you will wonder why. Does God not know? Does he not care? Was he unable to stop it? Even those well trained in theology and knowing the best answers scholars have devised may find the shadows of doubt growing in their minds and hearts. There will be what some of the ancients called "the dark night of the soul," times when the sense of God's presence grows dim, the reading of the Bible and prayer are dry, and guidance becomes difficult to discern. There will come a time when you pray fervently for one thing, and the opposite happens. You may suffer what Philip Yancey has termed *Disappointment with God*. There will come a time when temptation comes and you embrace it, and fall.

The hindrance to sanctification comes in the temptation, made vividly attractive by the evil one, to respond to such surprises by doubting God's goodness or concluding that one is hopelessly cursed and despair. But our theology of sanctification must have room for such unexpected surprises. J. I. Packer offers a helpful way to understand them.

> How does God in grace prosecute this purpose [of drawing us into fellowship with Himself]? Not by shielding us from assault by the world, the flesh and the devil, nor by protecting us from burdensome and frustrating circumstances, nor yet by shielding us

> from troubles created by our own temperament and psychology; but rather by exposing us to all these things, so as to overwhelm us with a sense of our own inadequacy, and to drive us to cling to him more closely. This is the ultimate reason, from our standpoint, why God fills our lives with troubles and perplexities of one sort and another: it is to ensure that we shall learn to hold him fast. (*Knowing God*, 250).

The best preparation seems to be to expect the unexpected. Expect it because God uses these things to grow us, and because there is an evil trinity that seeks to use them against us. On the plus side, there are also numerous aids to sanctification, called by many "the means of grace," which Wayne Grudem defines as "any activities within the fellowship of the church that God uses to give more grace to Christians" (*Systematic Theology*, 950); he lists eleven such activities. I would broaden his definition to include some activities we may do privately. For example, personal Bible study and prayer can be means of grace, as can public worship, the teaching of God's word, Christian fellowship, and the ordinances. But the key to all these means of grace is the link to faith. According to Eph. 2:8-9, grace is received "through faith." None of these activities are automatically means of grace, but when we participate with a faithful, believing heart, we believe God delights to minister to us through them. This means growth in faith is the key to all spiritual growth, for it is by faith that we access the strengthening grace of God.

We must consider one final question under the heading of sanctification: will all believers make it to the goal of sanctification? In other words, I am raising the question of the perseverance of the saints. Will all true Christians persevere in believing and following Christ, or is it possible for someone to fall away completely and finally, and ultimately lose their salvation?

5. Perseverance in sanctification. There are two problems in this area. The first is how to reconcile verses like Rom. 8:29-30, John 10:27-29 and others that emphasize and teach the security of the believer with passages like Heb. 6:4-6, 10:27-29 and others which warn of the dire consequences of falling away, and look, at least at first sight, to teach that believers can indeed fall away. The second problem is for those who do hold to perseverance. It is how to account for persons we know, who undeniably appeared to have been saved, who have fallen away from Christ. How do we resolve these problems? There are at least three approaches.

a. The Arminian position. The Arminian view is that a genuine believer can lose his or her salvation (for examples of this view, see I. H. Marshall, *Kept By the Power of God* or Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth*). The obvious problem is how those who hold this position can explain the verses that teach security.

b. The hypothetical position. This position sees Heb. 6 and 10 as hypothetical descriptions of what would happen if a Christian fell away, but in fact, these verses describe a situation that does not happen, in part because God uses warnings like those in Heb. 6 and 10 to correct those wandering into danger. A positive point is that the writer of Hebrews seems to doubt that the dire consequences he predicts will really happen to his readers (Heb. 6:9,

10:32-39). The difficulty it faces is the need for a warning if the danger described can never really happen.

c. The position that those who fall were never truly saved, or that if saved, they will eventually return. This position points to passages like I John 2:19 to show that perseverance shows the authenticity of conversion. Those who don't persevere weren't truly converted. As a backup, some add that if they were truly converted, they will be like the prodigal son. After a period of wild living in a far country, the true believer will come to his senses and return home, thus showing that he is a true son. This is probably the position most popular among Baptists, but its difficulty is how it is possible to understand the people described in Heb. 6:4-6 and 10:27-29 as non-believers.

It is a difficult question, especially when dealing with persons we know who are in a wandering condition. I affirm the reality of perseverance, based largely on the fact that the great bulk of the verses seem to support it, the emphasis on God's sovereignty and election virtually demand it, and I find the latter two explanations for the Hebrews passages more convincing than Arminian explanations of the passages in Romans and John. While the third position certainly fits many cases, I really think the hypothetical position is the best exegetical explanation of the Hebrews passages. (For more on this issue, see J. Matthew Pinson, ed., *Four Views on Eternal Security* and Herbert Bateman IV, ed., *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews*.)

D. The Work of God Completed. This is glorification. It is the final, complete transformation of our total being, the end of the process of salvation, and the necessary preparation for a heavenly life. At death, the non-material aspect of human nature (soul or spirit) is glorified in terms of moral perfection as the completion of sanctification (Phil. 1:6) and the end of the sinful nature. I think this happens as we see Christ and are made like him (I John 3:2). This is the first stage of glorification (Heb. 12:23). At the return of Christ, we will receive a resurrected or transformed body, like that of Jesus (I Cor. 15:52, Phil. 3:21). This is the second stage of glorification, which the redeemed are still awaiting in heaven, as they exist now in the intermediate state. This will be the end of the order of salvation outlined in Rom. 8:29-30. And though it lies in the future, it is so assured, so guaranteed, that Paul describes it as an accomplished fact.

All that is involved in this transformation is to some degree a matter of speculation, for Scripture does not give us a detailed description of our transformed state. We will be like Christ; that should be sufficient. Other questions about this subject we will treat in Christian Theology III, under our discussion of eschatology.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY II
UNIT 4: THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
OUTLINE

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CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY II
UNIT 4: THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

One of my professors at Southern Seminary, William Hendricks, liked to begin our study of each doctrine with a question to frame our thinking. His question for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was especially helpful: How is God made real in every age? His answer was: by Spirit, the Holy Spirit. I agree. It is the Holy Spirit that makes God real in the experience and life of believers.

Yet the Spirit remains for most of us somewhat elusive. Christ seems more concrete, for we know he took and has a human form, but the Spirit, as Jesus told us, is something like the wind. Worse still, some still think of him as the Holy Ghost, with the mysterious implications of that word. More modern cultural ideas of God have included the Force of Star Wars, with some parallels to the idea of the Spirit, but depersonalized.

Despite the elusiveness, this doctrine demands special attention for Christian leaders in our era, for the twentieth century was preeminently the century of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology. The Pentecostal and charismatic movements, for better or worse, have been one of the two or three most important developments of this past century, growing from nothing to a worldwide movement of millions.

Also, our world today is a highly experiential world. What is real is what is experienced. Yet experience alone and poorly interpreted can lead one astray. We need to teach accurately about the Spirit, and demonstrate in our personal lives the reality and power of the Spirit to minister effectively in this generation.

I. Biblical Foundations.

A. The Word "Spirit." The words for "spirit" in the Bible (*ruah* and *pneuma*) have five major meanings in Scripture:

1. the physical sense of wind or breath (as in Ex. 14:21 or John 3:8). This is the most common meaning for *ruah* in the OT (more than 150 times), and may serve as a metaphor for both the power of the Spirit and its elusive nature.

2. the psychological sense of a disposition or attitude (Ps. 51:10, 12, Is. 61:3); the word heart is more often used in this sense.

3. the anthropological sense of the human spirit, which I see as the capacity of the human being for relationship with God (Ps. 31:5, Rom. 8:16; see our discussion of the human constitution). Occasionally the OT uses *ruah* in the sense of the center of a person's being (perhaps due to the association of *ruah* with one's breath), but the more normal word for life is *nephesh*. The use of spirit for capacity for relationship with God is more pronounced in the NT (40 times: Matt. 5:3, Lk. 1:47, Rom. 1:9, Gal. 6:18, Phil. 4:23, Heb. 4:12, I Pet. 3:4). Colin

Brown defines spirit in this sense as "that aspect of man through which God most immediately encounters him. . . . that dimension of the whole man wherein and whereby he is most immediately open and responsive to God" (*NIDNTT*, vol. 3, p. 693).

4. the supernatural sense of spiritual beings. In the OT, *ruah* is not used for good angels (the word *malak* is used instead), but for evil spirits (I Sam. 16:14-16) and lying spirits (I Kings 22:21-23). These spirits are said to be sent from God, thus showing God's sovereignty over them, and his use of them in judging and punishing human sin (see II Thess. 2:11 for the same idea in a NT context, though without the word *pneuma*). In the NT, *pneuma* is occasionally used for good angels (Heb. 1:14), but is more often used for "unclean spirits," especially in the Synoptic gospels and Acts (38 times).

5. the divine sense of the Spirit of God, which portrays God as present and active in the world (the immanent aspect of deity). This is the use of *ruah* 94 times in the OT, and is the overwhelmingly predominant use of *pneuma* in the NT (more than 250 times).

An interesting difference between the OT and NT is the use of the adjective "holy" with Spirit. The phrase "Holy Spirit" is found only three times in all the OT (Ps. 51:11, Is. 63:10, 11), but is found almost a hundred times in the NT. There are several possible reasons for this difference.

One may be that the idea of the separate personality of the Spirit is much more clear in the NT. We must remember that while there are insinuations of the Trinity in the OT, it is primarily a NT doctrine. In the OT, the Spirit is thought of principally as the Spirit <u>of God</u>, rather than as a distinct personality which would be described with attributes such as holy. In any case, the OT emphasis on God's holiness would naturally extend to His Spirit.

A second reason may be the need to emphasize the holiness of God's Spirit in the NT as opposed to the unholiness of the unclean spirits which are prominent in the gospels and Acts. Or it may simply be that the NT writers were particularly impressed by the holiness of God's Spirit as he invaded and transformed their lives, in a deeper way than OT believers experienced him.

Of these five senses of the word "spirit," our interest is with the fifth, but we should remember that the other senses are possible, and there are a few places in Scripture where it is not completely clear which sense of "spirit" is intended (for example, does James 4:5 refer to the human spirit or God's Spirit?)

B. The Nature of God's Spirit. Before we proceed any further, we need to clarify that when we speak of God's Spirit, we are not speaking of an impersonal force, nor simply of an attribute of God. We are speaking of a personal, divine being.

The Spirit's deity can be seen in three ways:

1. There are <u>ascripitions of deity</u> in passages like II Cor. 3:17, Acts 5:3-4, Matt. 28:19 and John 14:16.

2. There are <u>actions of deity</u> where the Spirit is described as doing

things only God can do (convicting in John 16:8-11, regenerating in John 3:5 and Titus 3:5, and sanctifying in I Cor. 6:11).

3. There are attributes of deity used for the Spirit (such as “eternal,” Heb. 9:16).

The Spirit's personality can be seen in that he can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), he has a mind (Rom. 8:27), and a will (I Cor. 12:11). He should not be thought of as "it," but as the divine person he is.

C. The Progressive Revelation of the Spirit. It is important to note the progressive aspect of the revelation of the Spirit, for how he works in each age is related to the coming of Christ and the historical development of God's plan.

1. In the OT, the work of the Spirit is seen in four areas:

a. The creation and sustaining of life. Since God's first work is creation, and the Spirit is God's active power, we would expect to find the Spirit involved in creation (Gen. 1:2, Ps. 33:6). And, since Spirit and breath are linguistically connected, we would expect to find the Spirit involved in life (Gen. 2:7, Ps. 104:27-31, Job 33:4). Without breath, life is not possible; the Spirit is God's breath, the source of all breath, giving life to all that lives and breathes. Thus, the Nicene Creed refers to the Spirit as "the Lord and Life-giver," and a recent text on the doctrine of the Spirit, by Graham Cole, is entitled, *He Who Gives Life*.

b. Prophecy and the transmission of the word of the Lord. Many of the writing pre-exilic prophets did not make the claim to speak by the Spirit of the Lord explicitly, perhaps wanting to avoid association with the type of prophetic ecstasy produced by the Spirit in some of the earliest prophets (I Sam. 10:5-6, 19:23-24). But after the exile, prophets more readily attributed their prophecies to the work of the Spirit (Ezek. 2:1-2), and Zechariah looks back on all the former prophets and sees the Spirit as speaking through them (Zech. 7:12). And as we have already seen in our study of revelation, the Spirit was intimately involved in every aspect of that process (revelation, inspiration, canonization, transmission, and illumination).

c. The future hope. The OT looks to the coming of Messiah, as that One who will be specially anointed by the Spirit (Is. 11:1-2, 42:1), and the coming of the time when God's Spirit will be poured out on all God's people (Joel 2:28-29).

d. The giving of gifts. The most outstanding work of the Holy Spirit in the OT is in the enabling of people to do outstanding feats. The interpretation of dreams (Gen. 41:38, Dan. 4:8), the abilities of craftsmen (Ex. 31:3, 35:31), extraordinary strength (Judges 14:6,19), and other gifts leading to leadership (Judges 6:34) are all attributed to the Spirit.

There are two important differences to note between the giving of gifts in the OT and NT: (1) in the OT, it appears that the gifts given were temporary and given for a specific purpose; in the NT, gifts appear to be given permanently, and a general purpose is stated; (2) in the OT, only certain ones received gifts; in the NT, all believers are gifted.

Moreover, there is an overall difference in terms of the relationship of the Holy Spirit to God's people in the OT and NT. This difference can be illustrated by three prepositions: in the

OT, the Spirit came upon individuals but could afterwards leave (Saul in I Sam. 11:6, 16:14); in the gospels the Spirit was with the disciples (John 14:17); after Pentecost, the Spirit dwells permanently in all believers (John 14:17, Rom. 8:9-11).

A more difficult question is what experience of the Spirit did the average believer have in the Old Testament period? For people to experience genuine repentance and faith, for real communion with God in prayer, for understanding the messages God gave them through the Law and Prophets, some ministry of the Spirit would seem to be necessary. David experienced God's Spirit in inspiration (II Sam. 23:2) and feared the Spirit being taken from him (Ps. 51:11), but David's experience is probably not characteristic of that of the average Jewish believer.

Were OT believers regenerated? While the word does not appear in the OT, it seems that Jesus expected Nicodemus to understand the concept (probably from Ezek. 36:25-27). Whatever their experience of the Spirit was, those who came after Christ enjoyed a fuller relationship, enabled in some way by Christ's glorification (John 7:37-39). Usually the fuller relationship is seen as being indwelt by the Spirit. So while OT believers may have been regenerated by the Spirit, they did not enjoy the indwelling as NT believers do. (For more on this question, see Graham Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* and James Hamilton, Jr., *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments*.)

2. The Spirit in the Gospels. While the Spirit is not as prominent in the gospels as in some other parts of the NT (19 times in Matthew, 23 in Mark, 36 in Luke, and 24 in John), there are several themes that should be noted.

a. Jesus as the bearer of the Spirit. We have at times neglected the activity of the Spirit in Jesus' life, perhaps because we have overemphasized his deity and neglected the reality of his humanity. At any rate, the Spirit was everywhere involved in Jesus' life and ministry.

(1) Both Matthew and Luke attribute the conception of Jesus to the Holy Spirit. The language is somewhat general, and certainly doesn't concern the details of biology. Matt. 1:20 simply says, "what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." To Mary's question of how she can have a child since she is a virgin, Gabriel responds, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35). One question not explicitly answered is whether the Spirit supernaturally fertilized Mary's egg, or whether the Spirit implanted a supernaturally created embryo in Mary's womb. The genealogies in Matthew and Luke, both of which include or imply Mary, suggest that her contribution was more than just an incubator; that Christ was the Son of God and the son of Mary. But some early Anabaptists objected and advocated what has been called a celestial Christology. Either way, the Spirit was the power behind the conception of Christ.

(2) Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the descent of the Spirit on Jesus at his baptism (Mt. 3:13-17, Mk. 1:10-11, Lk. 3:21-22; John 1:32-33 also has the descent of the Spirit but does not explicitly identify the context as Jesus' baptism).

What is the meaning of the Spirit's descent here? On the one hand, it may simply be providing him with the strength necessary for his ministry ahead. When seen in context with the Father's words of approval, it may also be seen as inter-Trinitarian encouragement. And the

allusion to Is. 42:1 identifies the type of Messiah Jesus will be (a Suffering Servant) and identifies him as the prophesied one who would be anointed by the Spirit, a claim Jesus himself ratified shortly after his baptism, with his reading of Is. 61:1-2 and application of it to himself (Lk. 4:18-21).

(3) All 3 synoptic gospels mention the Spirit leading him into the desert (Mt. 4:1, Mk. 1:12, Lk. 4:1; Mark says the Spirit cast him, using the same word for the casting out of demons). This was one of several times when Jesus seemed to be aided by the Spirit, again confirming his humanity and giving us an example to follow.

Matt. 4:1 specifically says he "was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil." Some have seen this as problematic, in view of the statement in James 1:13 that God does not tempt anyone. The resolution comes in understanding that the word for "tempt" (*peirazo*) can also be translated "test" and in recognizing that the same event can have two purposes. The Spirit's purpose in leading Jesus into a time of testing was to bring him through it victoriously, thus confirming his role as our example, giving us training in how to engage in spiritual warfare. Satan's purpose was to tempt and destroy him; God's purpose was to test and develop him, and to accompany and empower him all the way. The same is true of God's people. It was true of Paul's thorn in the flesh, sent from Satan but turned by God to Paul's good (II Cor. 12:7-10). It may also help explain the puzzling phrase in the Lord's Prayer: "lead us not into temptation" (Matt. 6:13). On the one hand, if the meaning is indeed temptation, there is no need to fear that God will lead us into temptation (James 1:13). If the meaning is testing, then the prayer is in vain, for God will indeed expose us to tests, for our good and his glory. The best explanation, I think, comes in linking the first phrase with the second: "but deliver us from the evil one." The prayer is that in the times of testing that will come, we will not face them alone, but will experience the same power that brought Jesus through. In the end, they will not be what the devil desires, times of temptation, but what God desires, times of testing and approving.

b. The Spirit and the Dawn of the New Age. We mentioned the OT expectation of the Spirit's activity in the future; we see that expectation fulfilled in the gospels. Luke 1:15 predicts the coming of a forerunner, who will be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth. Luke 2:25-27 mentions Simeon, one of the last who experienced the Spirit in the OT manner ("upon him"). Jesus' claim in Lk. 4 to be the one anointed by the Spirit makes the dawning even clearer and the definitive clue is found in Matt. 12:28. The action of Jesus in driving out demons (not by his own divine power, but by the Spirit) testifies that the kingdom of God has become present, because the king is in their midst. The hoped for age to come has erupted into this present age. The result has been the manifestation of the Spirit in unusual acts of power, but the final blessing of the promised New Age lies still ahead: the pouring out of the Spirit on all God's people. But the wait will not be much longer.

c. Jesus and the baptism of (or with, or in; Greek *en*) the Spirit. Naturally, with the dawning of the age to come, we should not be surprised to find that the culminating outpouring of the Spirit is brought to the fore when Jesus comes. In fact, there are only seven verses in the NT that link the words "baptism" and "Spirit." Four of those verses are the promise, recorded in all four gospels, that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3:11, Mk. 1:8, Lk. 3:16, John 1:33; Matt. and Luke add "and fire," possibly signifying judgment). Two more are recollections of this promise in the book of Acts (Acts 1:5, 11:16). The final reference

is I Cor. 12:13. We must wait until we look at Acts to determine the meaning of this phrase, but it should be noted that it is linked to the fulfillment of OT prophecy.

d. Jesus and the Sending of the Spirit. John's gospel connects the coming of the Spirit with the glorification of Jesus (John 16:7, 7:37-39). The Spirit would not be sent until Jesus had died, resurrected, and ascended. The natural question is why this sequence is necessary. There is no answer in Scripture, so we are left to conjecture. It may be that the Spirit's full presence required the actual cleansing of sin by Christ's death before he could permanently indwell them. OT believers were saved by faith in the One who was to come and make atonement, but the effecting of that atonement was future to them. We are told little of the experience of the Spirit in the lives of OT believers. Surely they experienced some conviction of sin and his work of regeneration and illumination to some degree, but it does seem something new began with Jesus, and it is connected to his death in these passages.

Alternatively, it may be that the sending of the Spirit is appropriate, not for Jesus in his state of humiliation, but as the exalted conqueror of death, to whom God has given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). Perhaps it was more fitting for the Spirit to be sent by Christ after he had accomplished his work and been exalted by God the Father. In any case, it was Jesus who sent the Spirit.

e. Jesus and the "Little Pentecost" (John 20:22). If the sending of the Spirit was to be delayed until his ascension, what is the meaning of this verse where Jesus breathes upon the disciples and commands them to receive the Spirit. If they did so, what happened at Pentecost? If they didn't, why not?

There are two possible explanations of this verse. Some see it as a proleptic announcement that was not fulfilled until a few weeks later, at Pentecost. In support of this is the fact that the following verses mention no effects of the reception of the Spirit, such as happened at Pentecost. Another possibility is that this was a temporary, provisional gift of the Spirit (a "little Pentecost") to protect the disciples and empower their ministry until the full outpouring at Pentecost. In support of this, it can be noted that this giving of the Spirit is preceded by John's version of the Great Commission (John 20:21) and is followed by the description of the effects sharing and withholding the gospel will have. Either is possible, but I think the first is more likely. John's plan for his gospel did not include describing the events leading up to Pentecost, but he wanted to make plain that Jesus' commission to his disciples is matched by a gift sufficient to enable them to complete it.

f. The Spirit as Paraclete. We should not leave the gospels without noting the important teaching about the Spirit as "Paraclete" in John 14-16, some of the most complete and profound teaching on the Spirit in the NT.

First, we should note the new name given to the Spirit here: the advocate, helper, teacher, comforter, defender, the "one called alongside." The title expresses the variety of ministries the Spirit performs by coming alongside us.

Second, we may observe the functions of the Spirit in these chapters. Basically, it is to continue and universalize the ministry of Jesus. He is called "another Counselor" (John 14:16). Jesus had been the first; but now he was going and the Spirit would be "another (*allos*, not

heteros) Counselor." He would continue the ministry of Jesus, but without the limitation of a physical body. He would glorify Jesus, represent Jesus, bring to their mind what Jesus had taught. The implication is that one mark of the Spirit's work is that it is Christo-centric. Graham Cole rightly says, “The magnificence of the Spirit lies in this self-effacement or divine selflessness. For this reason believers are rightly called ‘Christians,’ not ‘Pneumians’” (284).

Third, several verses in these chapters relate the Spirit to the production of the NT. John 14:26, 15:26, and 16:13 speak of the development of a body of teachings, brought to the minds of the apostles by the Spirit. I believe we are justified in seeing the "doctrine of the apostles" (Acts 2:42) as essentially these teachings, the result of the work of the Spirit, who is called three times in these chapters "the Spirit of truth."

Fourth and finally, we should mention that it was verses like John 14:16-18 and 14:23 that required the eventual development of the doctrine of the Trinity.

3. The Spirit in the book of Acts. The importance of the book of Acts can be seen in the fact that the word *pneuma* appears here 70 times, more than Matthew, Mark, and John combined. As others have noted, the full title is more appropriately the Acts of the Holy Spirit, rather than the Acts of the Apostles. He is the major figure.

Acts is also important for the doctrine of the Spirit because it is the key source for most Pentecostal ideas, and can be difficult to interpret. It is a narrative, and not all things described in a narrative are necessarily prescribed as things we should do. Few would argue that we ought to choose church leaders by casting lots (Acts 1:26), or practice head shaving as part of our worship (Acts 21:24). Narrative material requires care in interpretation, and many favor interpreting narratives in the light of other, more explicitly didactic material.

a. Pentecost and Acts 2. Pentecost was 50 days after Passover, one of the three great feasts of Judaism (Ex. 23:14-17; Lev. 23:15-21), the feast of Weeks or first-fruits. What was symbolized in the celebration, God realized in the creation of a church, the first-fruits of the victory of Christ. They were not the first persons saved, but they were the first to feel the full effects of Christ's work, and those who accepted the gospel that day were the first-fruits of the preaching of the gospel of Christ, crucified and resurrected.

Many like to see Pentecost as the birthday of the church. Dispensationalists especially like to treat the church as something completely new. Others object that such a view discounts the continuity of the people of God in the OT and the people of God in the NT (covenant theology makes much of the parallels between OT and NT, and sees one people of God in two different eras). In my own view, I try to see both continuity and distinctiveness. I would see the call of Abram as the conception of the people of God; the OT period as the gestation; the gospels as the labor pains, but I do think it is appropriate to see Pentecost as the birth of the church. The Spirit's outpouring brought something new that makes the church special.

One evidence of this newness is the fact that Acts 2:42 contains the first occurrence of the word *koinonia* (fellowship) in the NT. Fellowship is an essential, constituent part of the church, but it was neither present nor possible until the Holy Spirit descended to bind believers into one body. The apostolic benediction (II Cor. 13:14) especially associates fellowship with the Spirit, for He is the giver and creator of all true fellowship.

On this day, special visible and audible signs of the Spirit's presence were given: rushing wind, tongues of fire, and speaking in other languages. All were particularly appropriate. Wind is of course one of the senses in which the word *pneuma* is used (though not in Acts 2:2), and may be a symbol for the Spirit (see Ezek. 37:9). Fire was a symbol for God's presence in the OT (Ex. 3:2-5, the burning bush; 13:2, the column of fire) and may be linked to the promise in Matthew and Luke of a baptism of Spirit and fire. The speaking in other tongues here was obviously a supernatural speaking of actual languages, and enabled the vast, multi-cultural masses in Jerusalem for the feast to hear God's message in their own languages.

It should be remembered, however, that this gift of tongues was not absolutely necessary for them to hear the message of God's mighty acts in Christ. They were all Jews, all able to speak Greek, the common tongue, and most likely were fluent in Aramaic and perhaps even Hebrew. Otherwise, they could not have participated in the celebration of Pentecost. Why then did God give this gift? I think there were two reasons. One is that this is something of a symbol of the reversal of the tower of Babel. There God confused languages to spread humanity over the earth and frustrate their pride. Now God's plan is to gather us together as one body in Christ. Second, the languages of Acts 2, as in other parts of Acts, serve as audible signs, confirming the reality of the reception of the Holy Spirit.

We should observe several differences between the gifts of tongues in Acts 2 and I Cor. 14: In Acts, the tongues were actual languages, immediately understood by at least some of the hearers; in I Cor. 14, the tongues must be interpreted. In Acts, the purpose is confirmation (and perhaps evangelization); in I Cor., the gift is to be used for the edification of the church. In Acts, all the disciples were speaking in tongues; in I Cor., only some, and only two or three should do so aloud. In Acts, the result was amazement; in I Cor., division. Therefore, I am not at all sure that we can identify the gift of tongues in I Cor. with the gift given on the day of Pentecost.

b. The baptism of the Spirit. As we mentioned earlier, there are only seven verses that connect the words baptism and Spirit. There is one verse in each of the four gospels, in which the promise is given that Jesus will baptize in or with the Holy Spirit. One verse in Acts (1:5) looks forward to the day of Pentecost as the fulfillment of that promise, and another verse in Acts (11:16-17) equates what happened to Cornelius and his friends (Acts 10:44-46) as another fulfillment of that promise. The final verse is I Cor. 12:13.

Baptist interpretation of this idea has been that the baptism of the Spirit is the reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit himself, who enters a believer's life, effects the union of the believer with Christ, and begins the ongoing work of sanctification and production of spiritual fruit. On the basis of I Cor. 12:13, we have affirmed that the baptism is an **initial** and **universal** work of the Spirit, in that it happens to all believers, and places them within the body of Christ (see the addition to the statement on the Spirit in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, clarifying this point). Thus, all believers have experienced this baptism, whether they know it or not. We have thus said the visible and audible signs in Acts 2 and 10 are not of the essence of the baptism, but were given to confirm the reality of the gift of the Spirit, as perhaps necessary or at least appropriate in those circumstances, but not to be expected in every instance of the baptism of the Spirit.

It should be noted that even Pentecostals do not fully follow the pattern of Acts 2, for they allow that one can be said to have received the baptism of the Spirit, even if they did not hear a rushing wind or see tongues of fire on their heads. Rather, they have chosen to make the experience of tongues the determinative sign for the baptism of the Spirit, and thus separate baptism of the Spirit from conversion, as a second, separate experience, which is evidenced by the gift of tongues.

The Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God formulate their definition of the baptism of the Spirit in these words: "We believe the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a special experience following salvation that empowers believers for witnessing and effective service, just as it did in New Testament times. . . . We believe the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is 'speaking in tongues,' as experienced on the day of Pentecost and referenced throughout Acts and the Epistles." (For the 16 Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God, see their website: http://ag.org/top/beliefs/truths_condensed.cfm).

Pentecostal pastor and author Don Basham defines it similarly:

> Essentially, baptism in the Holy Spirit is a doorway leading from a natural realm into a supernatural realm of life and experience. The average Christian, although truly professing Christ, operates largely on his own power, making his own decisions, living by his own strength, and controlling his own life. But through the baptism of the Holy Spirit the Christian steps out of this natural realm into a realm where he can begin to experience the supernatural gifts and powers of God's Holy Spirit.

He adds, "The initial evidence of entering this supernatural realm is the ability to speak in other tongues." (Basham, *A Handbook on Holy Spirit Baptism*, 40-41).

This understanding of the baptism of the Spirit is vulnerable to a number of criticisms. First, the idea that the baptism of the Spirit is a post-conversion experience is ill founded. Only seven texts link the words "baptism" and "Spirit." There is one verse in each of the gospels containing the promise of John the Baptist that Jesus would baptize in or with (the Greek preposition *en* is ambiguous) the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Matt. and Luke add fire to the Spirit in the promised baptism). One text in Acts looks forward to the fulfillment of this promise (Acts 1:5); one looks back to the fulfillment on the day of Pentecost (Acts 11:16). Thus six of the seven texts look to the unique experience of Pentecost (unique in being the first occasion of Spirit baptism, and unique in that subsequent occasions in the book of Acts are never marked by a mighty rushing wind and tongues of fire and are not always marked by the gift of speaking in other tongues). The remaining text seems to speak to a more normative experience of baptism in the Spirit, and it speaks of it as a universal and initial experience in the Christian life, associated with conversion and entrance into the universal body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13). In his contribution to *Five Views on Sanctification*, Pentecostal Stanley Horton recognizes this criticism and tries to make a distinction between the baptism in the Spirit (the experience of Acts 2) and baptism by the Spirit (the experience of I Cor. 12:13), but since the same Greek preposition (*en*) is used in all seven texts, this attempt does seem to be motivated by "Pentecostal hermeneutical bias," despite his disclaimer (129).

A second criticism is the insistence that the gift of tongues is the "initial physical evidence" that one has received this baptism. Acts 2:38, 10:45, and 11:17 seem to point more to

the gift of the Holy Spirit himself as the key to the baptism of the Spirit, more than the gift of tongues, and I Cor. 12:13 clearly has a universal reference. The Spirit baptizes all believers, and it must be at conversion, for He baptizes them into the body of Christ. The gift of tongues is not linked to the reception of the Spirit in Acts 8:17, 9:17, or I Cor. 12:13, and the insistence that all who are baptized in the Spirit will speak in seems contrary to Paul's expectation that all will not speak in tongues (I Cor. 12:30), but that all are baptized in the Spirit (I Cor. 12:13). Some critics of Pentecostalism go further and claim that the gift of speaking in tongues is not given today, citing its almost complete absence from the apostolic age until the twentieth century and the fact that it can be counterfeited, since it is practiced in other religions. This view is called cessationism. I see no strong biblical support for cessationism. Rather, Scripture seems to indicate that the gift of tongues is possible, but no more universal than any other gift, and a gift about which Paul seems somewhat hesitant (see I Cor. 14). I think the best position is that taken by A. B. Simpson, when confronted with this question almost a century ago: Seek not, but forbid not (see I Cor. 14:12 and 14:39).

A third criticism is the idea that a single experience will deliver one from all spiritual struggle. The common experience of virtually all Christians and the assumption of Scripture is that we never reach a point where there is no struggle, where we become immune to temptation. Jesus taught that in the world we will have tribulation (John 16:33). Paul warns those who think they are standing firm of the danger of falling (I Cor. 10:12) and Peter warns Christians to beware their enemy, who still seeks to devour them, and whom they must resist (I Pet. 5:8). Those who think that one experience will solve all their problems set themselves up for disillusionment, and may be tempted to fake a victorious life, lest someone doubt that they have not truly received the experience. They will not take the scriptural warnings with proper seriousness and may be ashamed to seek help when they struggle.

But if all these criticisms are accurate, and Pentecostals are wrong on one of their central doctrines, why are they multiplying so rapidly? I think there are three obvious reasons and probably others hidden in the providence of God. First, God can and does use imperfect instruments; after all, that's the only kind he has on earth. Second, there are many other positive aspects of Pentecostals. They believe the Bible; they teach the true gospel; they are zealous in service. God may be blessing them in spite of their views of the Spirit. But third, I think many Pentecostals do have a real and vital experience of the Spirit, but they do not articulate it accurately. What they call the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit is often, I think, an experience of being filled with the Spirit (which is how Luke describes the experience of the disciples in Acts 2:4, though it is clearly the fulfillment of the promised baptism of Acts 1:5). Indeed, material on the Assemblies of God website repeatedly uses the terms baptism in the Spirit and filling of the Spirit as synonyms, but there are important differences that we will examine below.

In response to these criticisms of their view of the baptism of the Spirit, Pentecostals counter with Acts 8:14-17 and Acts 19:1-6, two passages that appear to be contrary to the Baptist view of the baptism of the Spirit.

In Acts 8:14-17, there is a delay between conversion and the reception of the Spirit. While some have questioned whether or not the Samaritans were truly converted prior to the coming of John and Peter, it is more likely that they were in fact genuinely converted, but that

the delay in receiving the Spirit is due to the need for visible confirmation that even Samaritans could receive the Spirit.

The hatred of Jews for Samaritans is well known and reflected in Scripture (John 4:9). In fact, it was not one of the apostles, but Philip who took the gospel to these despised people. Knowing how inherently suspicious the Jews would be of Samaritan converts, God delayed the gift of the Holy Spirit until John and Peter could be there to witness and verify their reception of the Spirit. In fact, there seems to be a similar confirmation whenever the gospel moves out. Using Acts 1:8 as a model, we see the initial visible confirmation given to those in Jerusalem (Acts 2), to those living in Samaria (Acts 8), and to those at the ends of the earth (the Gentiles of Caesarea, Acts 10).

Thus, I conclude that Acts 8 does not give a basis for the baptism of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion. Rather, the delay is an exception, made due to the particular historical situation of the Samaritans. At any rate, this does not support the Pentecostal position of tongues as the evidence of the baptism in the Spirit, for speaking in tongues is nowhere mentioned in Acts 8.

Acts 19 is a different situation. I believe there is no delay between conversion and reception of the Spirit in this passage. Rather, these Ephesians were not converted until Paul came. Paul's question in v. 2 contains two assumptions: they were believers; and believers receive the Spirit when they believe. Since Paul knew the second assumption was true, the first assumption must be in error. The majority of scholars take that position on this passage. These twelve disciples were disciples of John the Baptist; they still needed to hear of Christ and the gospel. After hearing from Paul, they believed, were baptized and received the Spirit through the imposition of hands, all as part of their experience of conversion.

We must acknowledge that there is no one universal order of events in the accounts in Acts. Acts 8 and 19 include the imposition of hands; Acts 2 and 10 do not. The significance of the imposition of hands is probably blessing, and perhaps contributes to the idea of confirmation, but it is not a universal requirement. Water baptism precedes the coming of the Spirit in Acts 8 and 19, but follows it in Acts 10. I think we must allow the Holy Spirit to be free and sovereign in acting as he wishes. Yet at the same time, I do not think we err in seeing the baptism of the Spirit as normally part of conversion, in which one receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. The accounts in Acts require nothing else.

c. Other themes in the book of Acts. Though we normally think about Pentecost and the baptism of the Spirit in connection with the Spirit in Acts, there are other themes equally if not more prominent.

The filling of the Spirit is mentioned 10 times in the book of Acts (2:4, 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55, 9:17, 11:24; 13:9, 13:52), compared to baptism of the Spirit, mentioned only twice (1:5 and 11:16). Drawing the information from these verses together, we may say:

(1) The filling of the Spirit is not a one time event. Acts 4:8 implies a fresh filling of the Spirit ("Peter, having just been filled with the Spirit"), and yet Acts 4:31 places him among those filled with the Spirit again.

(2) Filling can be a habitual characteristic of individuals, and visible to others (so the deacons of Acts 6; Barnabas in Acts 11:24).

(3) The evidence of the Spirit's filling seems most often to be the Spirit's fruit (boldness, wisdom, good, full of faith, full of joy).

(4) The filling of the Spirit is never sought; rather, God gives it on his initiative to those shown walking in obedience, boldness, faith, and commitment.

There are also seven instances of guidance by the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts (8:29; 11:27-30; 13:2-4; 15:28; 16:6-7; 20:22-23; 21:10-11). Perhaps the most notable fact about these instances is the amazing variety of means used by the Spirit: a voice directing an individual, a prophet expressing a warning to a congregation, a worship experience, a theological debate, rational consideration of barriers, impressions and visions, a sense of compulsion, another prophetic warning. Note also that at least three (13:2-4; 15:22-29; 16:6-10) are clearly corporate guidance. God doesn't just deal with individuals.

4. The Spirit in Paul (and the rest of the NT). We turn now to Paul, who is preeminently the apostle of the Spirit (130 occurrences of "spirit" in his letters). We are aided in an analysis of Paul's view of the Spirit by the 900 page *magnum opus* of Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. He spends 800 pages exegeting every major Pauline passage on the Spirit (and many minor ones) and gives 100 pages of summary.

To summarize a brilliant discussion, he focuses Paul's view in the three first words of his title. For Paul, the Spirit is a person, the person of God himself. He is no mere force, but is God. And because of the Trinity, and the revelation of God in Christ, we can know the Spirit as person. He says:

> Christ has put a human face on the Spirit as well. If we are truly to understand Paul, and to capture the crucial role of the Spirit in his theology, we must begin with his thoroughly Trinitarian presuppositions. Not only has the coming of Christ changed everything for Paul, so too has the coming of the Spirit. In dealing with the Spirit, we are dealing with none other than the <u>personal presence of God</u> himself. (Fee, 6).

The second major point is that the Spirit is God's <u>presence</u>, or as I have already said, the Spirit makes God real in our experience:

> This is how we know God's love for us in Christ (Rom. 5:5); this is what makes us certain that we are God's very children (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15-16); this is why holiness is not optional (I Thess. 4:7-8), why we must not grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30), why Timothy must not flag in the context of external pressures (2 Tim. 1:6-7)--because we are indwelt by God himself. (Fee, 8).

Fee's third major point is that the Spirit is God's empowering presence. Paul's understanding here has everything to do with eschatology. As we saw in the gospels, the coming of the Spirit signified that the age to come had broken into this present age. His power makes signs and wonders a part of the Christian life, and yet also gives us strength to endure, for His

power now is only a down payment on the "not yet" aspect of the Christian life, which comes only at the consummation.

To document fully all Fee says and discuss the passages involved would take another 900 pages. I wish to focus on simply three aspects of the Spirit's empowering work in our midst: the Spirit's role in conversion, sanctification, and service.

a. The Spirit in conversion. Paul's trust in preaching the gospel was not in his cleverness, but the power of the Spirit to bring conviction of sin, and to produce faith in the human heart (I Cor. 2:4; 12:3; I Thess. 1:5). Apart from the Spirit, there is no conversion. Regeneration, the production of new life, is also a work of his power (Titus 3:5), and those he regenerates he also baptizes into the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13).

But the most important part of the Spirit's work in conversion is making effective our union with Christ. Here I am attempting to describe what Fee calls God's presence. It is the Spirit that makes our union with God and his presence in our lives more than words. Rom. 8:9-11 makes clear that Christ lives in us through His Spirit. Rom. 8:14-16 says we recognize our adoption through the Spirit. Eph. 3:16-17 teaches us that we need the empowering work of the Spirit for Christ to settle down in our hearts. And I John 3:24 and 4:13 teach us that we know we are in Christ by means of his Spirit. In all these ways and more, it is the Spirit's work that makes it all real in our experience.

b. Sanctification. In our discussion of salvation, we looked at a number of aspects of sanctification: the twofold meaning of the word (set aside and moral purity), the twofold sense of sanctification (positional and continual), differing models of sanctification (crisis vs. consistent growth), and the relationship of justification and sanctification. Here we want to relate sanctification more specifically to the work of the Spirit. I believe we may do so by considering three statements.

(1) The indwelling Holy Spirit is the source of sanctification. Certainly the Father and Son are involved in planning and providing the basis for sanctification (Christ's blood; see I John 1:7), but I think the Spirit is especially involved. He is the agent of positional sanctification, setting us apart for salvation (II Thess. 2:13, I Pet. 1:2), and imputing Christ's righteousness to us by uniting us with Christ. He must also be the source for continual sanctification. Any imparted righteousness we receive from Christ we receive via the Holy Spirit. And as he is Holy and living within us, we will be holy to the degree he has control of us.

This may be seen in the contrast between Romans 7 and 8. The question of whether Rom. 7:14-25 refers to a Christian or non-Christian is difficult. But it is not difficult to see the contrast between Rom. 7 and 8. The person in Rom. 7, believer or non-believer, is living on his own resources (I, me, my, mine; 39 times in 7:14-25); the person in Rom. 8 has learned to live in the power of the Spirit (18 times in Rom. 8).

(2) The goal of sanctification is a life characterized by the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Again, we should note that it is the fruit of the Spirit, not of human effort. We must cultivate the garden, and keep it free of weeds and pests, but the fruit is not produced by human effort, but by the Spirit. To have that fruit produced in abundance seems to me a pretty fair description of a Christlike life, which is our ultimate goal.

(3) The means to sanctification is walking in the fullness of the Spirit. We noted above from the book of Acts that filling is a multiple time event in the believer's life. Some instances of filling may in fact be what Charismatics and Pentecostals mistakenly call the baptism of the Spirit. The problem is that a second blessing is not enough; we need further fresh experiences with the Spirit. However, Acts also reveals that walking in the fullness of the Spirit can become somewhat habitual, so that one may be described as "full of the Spirit" as a characteristic. We saw that it is evidenced by things like the fruit of the Spirit, and that it is never explicitly sought in the book of Acts. But in Paul's one mention of the filling of the Spirit, it is commanded (Eph. 5:18).

Close examination of the word Paul uses (*plerousthe*) yields several insights: it is a command (imperative), common to all believers (plural), to be continuously (present) controlled (passive, comparison to wine) by the Spirit. And, as in Acts, the evidence of filling (vv. 19-21) is activity revealing the fruit of the Spirit: joyful singing, grateful thanksgiving, a loving, servant, submissive spirit toward others.

It is curious in that it is a passive command: Let yourself be filled with the Spirit! It is no human achievement, yet we play some role. I believe our role is to obey two other commands we are given in regard to the Spirit: Eph. 4:30, where we are told not to grieve the Spirit, and I Thess. 5:19, where we are told not to quench the Spirit. I believe these are the two conditions for being filled with the Spirit, for they are inherent in the nature of the Spirit.

We must not grieve the Spirit by tolerating known sin in our lives. It is not that we must be perfect, but we must not resist the Spirit's sanctifying work, for He is a Holy Spirit and will dwell in fullness only where He is allowed to be who He is.

Further, we must not quench the Spirit by retaining some areas of our lives not yielded to his control, for He is God the Holy Spirit, and will dwell in fullness only where His sovereignty is recognized. If He is allowed to be holy and sovereign, I believe He is more than willing to fill us. So then all of us really have as much of the Holy Spirit as we really want.

These points on the role of the Spirit can help us answer some questions we often face concerning sanctification. Is it all of God, or does it depend on me? Should I let go and let God, or should I pursue sanctification (Heb. 12:14)? Is sanctification a struggle or a matter of resting in the Spirit? I think the balance and proper order is seen in Phil. 2:12-13.

"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." That is, you are called to show forth the effects of salvation, to crucify the sinful nature, to fight the good fight, to keep in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). We are to feed the garden of our soul with truth (John 17:17), to keep it free of those things that would grieve or quench the Spirit.

But we do so recognizing that we are able to do so, "for it is God who works in you to will and act according to his good purpose." He is the Source, He produces the fruit, He is the power; He must initiate and complete all his good work in us (Phil. 1:6, I Thess. 5:24 and then note 23a).

c. Service. Principally, the Spirit empowers our service by giving us spiritual gifts. The four most important truths about spiritual gifts are all found in one verse: I Cor. 12:7.

(1) The universality of spiritual gifts: "to each one." These come with conversion, as standard equipment in every believer's life. At conversion, the Spirit baptizes believers into the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13), comes to indwell believers (Rom. 8:9), and gives spiritual gifts to each one, "just as he determines" (I Cor. 12:11).

(2) The definition of spiritual gifts: "the manifestation of the Spirit." These words give the best short definition of spiritual gifts I have encountered. A spiritual gift is an ability to minister that reveals the Spirit's work in and through the believer.

They are different from the talents that are often evident in the lives of non-believers, because these talents are given by God as part of what is called common grace (blessings that are given indiscriminately to believers and non-believers, as in Matt. 5:45). Since the Spirit does not indwell non-believers, what they do cannot manifest His presence.

In the case of believers, their talents may be different from their spiritual gifts, but I believe the Spirit may take a talent and use it as a gift. Someone with a wonderful voice may find after conversion that their voice can minister as a gift. After all, the ultimate source of talents as well as gifts is God. He, knowing His plans for your life and the place He has for you in the body of Christ, may well give you talents in keeping with your personality, give you opportunities to develop them, and then after conversion, transform them into spiritual gifts for service in the body of Christ. But this is not necessarily the case. We must always allow for the freedom of the Spirit, to give gifts as He determines. Also, one who is talented in some area may be tempted to use that talent in the church without reliance on the Spirit. In such a case, the result will be human, fleshly talent, but not a manifestation of the Spirit.

(3) The nature of spiritual gifts: "is given." Spiritual gifts are given, not earned. Therefore, there is no room for boasting about gifts. They are <u>gifts</u>, given freely by God.

In I Cor. 12, there are two different words used for spiritual gifts. The first, in I Cor. 12:1, is *pneumatika*, a word that emphasizes the point that gifts manifest the Spirit (*pneuma*). The second word, and the one that is more common, is *charismata* (I Cor. 12:4). This word emphasizes that these gifts are grace-gifts (*charis*), given without any regard to human merit.

They are not earned by human effort, merited by spiritual achievement, or seized by fervent prayer. They are gifts, given by the gracious Father.

(4) The purpose of spiritual gifts: "for the common good." They are not given for our enjoyment, but for our employment; not to puff up ourselves, but to build up the body. Thus, they must be exercised in the spirit of love. It is no coincidence that I Cor. 13, the chapter on love, is found between I Cor. 12 and 14, the two lengthiest discussions of spiritual gifts.

There are three further issues that are not addressed in I Cor. 12:7, but should be addressed by us.

(5) The permanence of spiritual gifts. Are they, once given, a permanent part of your person, or may they be given temporarily, for a specific time and situation, and then disappear?

I know of no clear scriptural answer (Rom. 11:28-29 is not speaking of spiritual gifts), but the idea of permanence seems to make more sense for the majority of the gifts. There seems to be no reason why a gift like teaching or pastor/teacher or helps would not be permanent. But I know of no one who has claimed a gift of healing or miracles such that they could heal or perform miracles at will, so some gifts, particularly some of the sign gifts, may be transitory or even momentarily given. In general, though, I think we are justified in thinking of spiritual gifts as abilities that are given permanently.

(6) The number of gifts. Below are the three major lists of gifts found in the NT. Together, they contain 19 or 20 gifts, depending on whether service and helps are regarded as two gifts or one. The most important factor to me is that all three lists are different. Apparently, Paul did not think it important that each church have all the gifts he listed. The reason, almost certainly, is because he never intended to give an exhaustive list. Each list is simply meant to be suggestive and illustrative of the types of gifts God gives. There are other gifts not mentioned here: music, building, cooking, hospitality, repair, intercession, and others. So use these as they are intended, and don't try to force every gift to fit one of these categories. But since you will be asked, I will give a brief description of the gifts listed.

Rom. 12:6-8	I Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30	Eph. 4:11
Prophecy	Message of wisdom	Apostleship
Service	Message of knowledge	Prophecy
Teaching	Faith	Evangelism
Encouraging	Healing	Pastor-teacher
Giving	Miraculous powers	
Leadership	Prophecy	
Showing mercy	Ability to distinguish between spirits	
	Tongues	
	Interpretation of Tongues	
	Apostleship	
	Teaching	

Helping

Administration

Prophecy- most see two senses of prophecy: (1) to speak God's word to a specific situation (forth-tell) and (2) to say what will happen (foretell). The OT prophets did both. The NT refers to two specific instances of foretelling (Acts 11:27-28, 21:8-11). In either case, the OT provides two tests for the authenticity of a prophet: (1) his prophecies must not contradict what God has already revealed (Deut. 13:1-3) and (2) what he prophecies must come true (Deut. 18:21-22).

Service- this is a word used for humble service, such as that done by the first deacons (*diakonos*). Matt. 25:44, Rom. 15:25, and II Cor. 8:4 indicate that the service is ministry to basic, physical needs, and is characteristic of the attitude of a true leader (I Cor. 16:15). Some see this gift as synonymous with the gift of helps mentioned in the list in I Cor. 12.

Teaching- the ability to present the truth in such a way that others are able to understand and profit from it.

Encouraging- also translated exhorting, comforting, urging, or even cheering up. The same root is used four times in John 14-16 for the Holy Spirit. This is the ability to come alongside others, giving them what is needed to lift their spirits and motivate them to action. The biblical example is Barnabas in the book of Acts (see 4:36-37, 9:26-27, 11:22-26, 13:1-3, 15:36-40).

Giving-the full translation in Romans is "contributing to the needs of others." The ability to make, manage and especially give money is included in this gift.

Leadership-the word used may mean either lead (as in I Thess. 5:12) or give aid. Some think that the context implies another serving gift like giving and showing mercy, and thus favor the second possibility. Most translations take the former, which has the idea of someone over others, who takes responsibility for showing the way.

Showing mercy-a capacity for empathy, and the ability to give emotional support to those who are hurting. Gal. 6:1-2 is an illustration, though it does not use the words showing mercy.

Message of wisdom-taken by some to mean an obviously supernatural message given to answer a question or specific need, it may also mean an equally supernatural but not as obvious ability to give wise counsel concerning the wise, prudent, godly course of action in a given situation. In the context of I Cor., it may refer to messages that focus on Christ crucified, God's secret wisdom (see I Cor. 1-2).

Message of knowledge-again, by some it is taken to be some information supernaturally revealed, but may mean the capacity to see what information is relevant to a given situation. Again, in the context of I Cor. it may refer to messages that demonstrate the proper use of knowledge, to build up others, not to puff up oneself. The problem with both this gift and the

message of wisdom is that we have no other information or explanation of these gifts in Scripture.

Faith-this is more than saving faith; it is the ability that makes a person what we call visionary.

Ability to distinguish between spirits-I believe this is an unusual sensitivity to distinguish between spiritual truth and counterfeits, to discern dangers in following certain paths of thought or teaching (see I John 4:1-3).

Apostleship-though there are no apostles today in the foundational sense of those who were the authorized representatives of Jesus, the word "apostle" can also mean simply sent out. Some believe this gift applies to missionaries, or those involved in pioneer work.

Helping-see service. This is a very general word for the one who sees and meets the needs of others. It is found only this one time in the NT.

Administration-though translated administration, the word is actually that of a helmsman or guide, and has the idea more of spiritual guidance than what we call administration. I think there is such a gift as what we call administration, but it is doubtful that this word refers to it.

Evangelism-the ability to communicate the gospel with unusual effectiveness, either one-on-one or in a large group setting.

Pastor/teacher- the gift most needed in a pastor, this is the ability to guard, protect and provide for God's people, principally by teaching them the truths of God's word and applying it to their lives according to the needs of each one.

Again, these should not be seen as an exhaustive list, but being aware of them can aid us in discovering our gifts. I suggest these steps:

*Be aware of the types of gifts God gives. This is where these lists can help in suggesting possibilities.

*Get involved in trying to meet needs. As many have said, God finds it easier to steer a moving car. Waiting till God tells you your gift is simply laziness.

*Get counsel and evaluation from others who have the chance to observe your ministry.

*Look at the results. Do others profit from your ministry, and do you experience joy and a sense of “fit” when using your gifts.

*At the same time, knowledge of one’s gifts should not be used to avoid obeying commands that are common to all, but as a way of wisely focusing one’s ministry, in view of the limited time and energy that we all have.

(7) The miraculous gifts. I think it is valid to consider the miraculous gifts (tongues, interpretation of tongues, healing and miracles) as a separate group, for three reasons.

First, these gifts appear in only one letter of the New Testament, and appear to have been problematic in that letter. Romans, which is Paul's most systematic and complete letter, does not mention the miraculous gifts, but does mention other gifts. This is possibly an indication that these gifts are not normally a part of church life.

Second, the miraculous, or sign gifts have been absent from church life for most of the history of the church. Only in the twentieth century has there been widespread practice and interest in these gifts, especially the gift of tongues.

Third, these gifts are the most obvious, spectacular and controversial gifts. Among Christians today, there are at least three opinions about these gifts.

(a) The cessationist view. Some believe the miraculous gifts ceased at the end of the apostolic age. They were given to confirm the message of the apostles (Heb. 2:3-4) and with the end of the apostolic age and the completion of the New Testament revelation, these gifts ceased. This is called the cessationist position.

Those who hold this position say that this is the reason why they are conspicuous by their absence in the history of the church. While God certainly healed and heals, and performed and performs miracles, God has not given these abilities as gifts since the apostolic age. However, there are two considerable problems with this view.

First, while Heb. 2:3-4 says confirmation of the apostles' message was one purpose of such sign gifts, it certainly does not say it was the only purpose. And the use of such gifts in Corinth does not seem connected with confirmation of the apostles' message. In other words, there is little evidence in the NT that would lead us to expect the end of these gifts.

Second, what are we to make of the millions who believe they are receiving these gifts, especially the gift of tongues, today? Those who believe the miraculous gifts have ceased say that these people are deceived. Either they have been deceived by Satan, or they have deceived themselves. They note, correctly, that tongue-speaking is an emotional experience, that it is present in religions other than Christianity, and that it can therefore be the product of human emotions. They also note that the gift most emphasized among those who uphold the validity of these gifts is tongue-speaking, the gift most easily counterfeited or produced by human emotion. Healing and miracles are much easier to validate objectively.

I have no doubt that some people, especially those in churches that stress tongue-speaking as an essential element of a <u>real</u> Christian's experience, have worked themselves up to such an emotional state that they have spoken in tongues, but it has been the result of human emotions, not the Holy Spirit. The difficulty is in claiming this is the case for all those who have experienced these gifts.

(b) The continuationist view. A second position is that all the gifts continue to be given today. Thus the miraculous gifts can or at least should be an important part of every church's life. Some would even say speaking in tongues should be a part of every Christian's life, and is the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Those who hold this position offer as evidence the Scriptural testimony in Acts and I Corinthians and God's obvious and evident blessing on the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. How could these churches be so vital, win so many people, produce such transformed lives, if they are deceived about these sign gifts? But there are at least three serious problems with this view.

First, the biblical evidence is not at all clearly in their favor. The material in Acts is quite different. There, at least in Acts 2, those speaking tongues spoke actual languages. This is not the case in I Cor. 12 or in tongue speaking as it is practiced today. This has been confirmed by several linguistic studies of tongue speaking. Moreover, the purpose of tongues in Acts 2, 11, and 19 is different. It is not a part of the church's worship, or of the individual's private prayer life, but does seem to be for the purpose of confirming the reception of salvation and the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, it confirmed the outpouring of the Spirit on all the disciples, men and women, young and old. In Acts 10, it confirmed God's acceptance of even non-Jews among His people. And in Acts 19, it confirmed the spread of the gospel beyond Judea and Samaria. There is also no evidence that these instances of tongue-speaking represent a gift; they seem more to be initial instances and not an ongoing pattern. So we are left with I Cor. 12, a slender and problematic basis for the claim that the sign gifts are to be an expected part of the life of churches today. Why are they absent from the lists in Romans and Ephesians? I have heard or read no good explanation of this from those who hold this position.

A second problem is with the insistence that these gifts are for every church or every Christian. I Cor. 12 is the chapter that teaches most emphatically the necessity of diversity in the body. I Cor. 12:30 asks rhetorically, "do all speak in tongues?" expecting clearly a negative answer. And, in any case, gifts are given by God's determination, not our choice (I Cor. 12:11).

The claim that tongue-speaking is the evidence of the baptism of the Spirit is also lacking in biblical foundation. The clearest verse about the baptism of the Spirit is I Cor. 12:13, which emphasizes the universality of the baptism of the Spirit--all believers have received the baptism of the Spirit, because it happens at the moment of conversion, at the moment of entering the one body of Christ.

A third problem with the claim that the sign gifts have been continued as part of the life of the church is their absence in the history of the church. Clearly, they are not necessary to the health of the church. In fact, while the blessing of God is evidently upon the Pentecostal and charismatic movement, it may be in spite of and not because of their emphasis on the miraculous gifts. God's blessing may be on them because of their openness to receiving the empowering of the Spirit, because of their emphasis on praise, because of their study of the Bible, because of their use of laypeople, because of their zeal in sharing the gospel. These factors may be claimed as normative elements of vital churches throughout history. Any church that has these emphases will be vital, regardless of whether or not they practice miraculous gifts.

(c) “Seek not, forbid not” or “open but cautious,” or “open but discerning.” Seeing problems with both the position that these gifts ceased with the end of the apostles and the position that they have continued to be an important part of the life of the church, I take a third position. It was first formulated in 1907 by A. B. Simpson when confronted by an outbreak of the sign gifts, principally tongue-speaking, in a seminary of his denomination, the Christian and Missionary Alliance. His response, based in I Cor. 14:12 and 39, is "seek not . . . forbid not."

We should not seek miraculous gifts, tongues in particular. If we seek gifts at all, it should be the speaking gifts, such as prophesy, for they are more useful in edifying the church. The gift of tongues is hedged with restrictions as no other gift, and apparently caused problems at Corinth as it has at other churches. Therefore, in direct opposition to what is encouraged in many Pentecostal churches, we are not to seek the sign gifts.

But neither are we to forbid them. The Holy Spirit is a free and sovereign Spirit, and may be doing a new thing in this century among the Pentecostals and Charismatics. I find it very hard to believe that all those who speak in tongues have fooled themselves. Similarly, I know there are many charlatans and frauds who claim to have gifts of healing, and I do not know personally anyone who has this gift, but I do not see a basis for denying the possibility that God can give this gift. Seek not, but forbid not.

Some Pentecostals and Charismatics have begun to realize the difficulties with the claims that tongue-speaking is the evidence of the baptism of the Spirit, and that tongue-speaking is for all churches or all Christians. They claim only that miraculous gifts are given, and that they may be received and practiced for the blessing and edification of the body. This is close to the view that I am advocating, and I am hopeful that as the Pentecostal and charismatic movements mature, there may be less fear and suspicion between those in the different groups, and more openness to learning from one another as brothers and sisters, fellow members in the one body of Christ.

II. Historical Developments.

A. After an initial period of controversy, the Church accepted the deity of the Spirit. The Nicene Creed refers to the Spirit as the "Lord and Life-giver." Further developments awaited Augustine.

In the book he himself considered his most important, *The Trinity*, Augustine suggested we view the Spirit as the *vinculum caritatis*, the link of love that exists between the Father and Son. He also linked the Spirit to the church: "what the soul is in our body, the Holy Spirit is in the body of Christ, which is the Church." This second idea, linking the Spirit to the church as her soul, her power or source, has been widely followed.

B. In the time of the Reformation, the role of the Spirit in confirming and illuminating Scripture arose as the Reformers challenged the sole right of the church to interpret Scripture in

the name of the perspicuity of Scripture and the Holy Spirit's ministry. Calvin especially linked the Spirit to the Word in enlightening and sanctifying.

C. John Wesley had a role in sparking thought about sanctification in his teaching on Christian perfectionism. After Wesley, a number of churches developed this idea into a full blown doctrine of sanctification as a second blessing, distinct from salvation, given not gradually but in one overwhelming experience of sanctification. Charles Finney and others later referred to the second blessing as the baptism of the Spirit.

This doctrine began to gain some strength among Methodists in the latter 19th century. When the Methodist Church took a stand against sanctification as a distinct second work of grace which lifted believers to a new level of spiritual life, many advocates of this view withdrew from Methodism and developed what are called the "holiness churches" (Nazarenes, Wesleyans, etc.). More than 23 such denominations formed between 1893 and 1900 by former Methodists. These are important in that they emphasized the importance of one overwhelming experience that transformed the believer's life, called that experience the baptism of the Spirit, and thus served as the environment in which the Pentecostal movement began.

D. The Pentecostal Movement.

1. Charles Fox Parham was a teacher at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, and part of this holiness movement. He and his students conducted a class study of Acts and concluded that the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was the gift of tongues, and that this gift was available to all believers.

Not long after they reached this conclusion, on Jan. 1, 1901, a young lady named Agnes Ozman asked Parham to lay hands on her, and when he did, she entered into an ecstatic experience, and according to witnesses, began to speak in Chinese. This was interpreted as confirmation of their views. Soon the majority of the rest of the students received the gift of tongues, too. This is the first explicit link between the baptism of the Spirit as a post-conversion experience and the gift of tongues as confirmation.

2. The Azusa Street Revival. In 1905, Parham moved to Texas and opened another Bible college where he taught a young man named William Seymour. Seymour was called to pastor a holiness church in Los Angeles, but when they discovered that Seymour had embraced the ideas of Parham and wanted to preach them, they asked him to resign. He began to preach anyway, first in the streets and in homes, and later in a rented, former Methodist church on 312 Azusa Street.

On April 9, 1906, the revival began. Many were cured and spoke in tongues, miracles were observed, everyone was stirred. One described what he saw: "They shouted for 3 days and nights. The people came from all parts. When they arrived, they began to feel the power of God, and the whole city was moved." One account tells how the people shouted so loud, a roof caved in, but no one was hurt.

The revival continued for three years, and became famous. Thousands visited Los Angeles to see what was going on, and took the teaching on the baptism of the Spirit and tongues back to their churches. This was the real launching pad of Pentecostalism. Many churches and denominations became Pentecostal; others divided over this question, but the movement has continued and become a major force in contemporary Christianity all over the world. Today there are more than 200 Pentecostal denominations in the U.S. alone, and it is a powerful force in South America, Africa, and Korea.

3. The Charismatic Movement. A new variation of Pentecostalism began in the 1960's, called the charismatic movement (named for its interest in the charisms, or spiritual gifts, especially tongues). Though this movement differs from Pentecostalism in several respects, I treat it here as an offshoot of Pentecostalism because they share the emphasis on tongues and the baptism of the Spirit.

The charismatic movement is usually traced to an Episcopal priest named Dennis Bennett. On April 3, 1960, he shocked the congregation of St. Mark's in California by sharing that he had been experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit in new ways in his life in recent months, including speaking in tongues. He was asked to resign that afternoon, and agreed to do so, but the movement spread rapidly, mainly among mainline churches. Rather than withdrawing and forming their own denominations or joining the Pentecostals, many of these individuals remained within their own denominations and worked for reform.

By 1967, the movement reached the Catholic Church. During February of that year, about 30 faculty and students from Duquesne University went on a weekend retreat to study the first four chapters of Acts. There was no planned meeting on Saturday night of that weekend, but many of the group felt drawn to the chapel. As they prayed there, they experienced the Spirit.

> There was no urging, there was no direction as to what had to be done. The individuals simply encountered the person of the Holy Spirit as others had several weeks earlier. Some praised God in new languages, others quietly wept for joy, others prayed and sang. They prayed from ten in the evening until 5 in the morning.

Since that time, the Charismatic Renewal has grown and become an important factor in the Catholic Church.

4. The Third Wave. Peter Wagner gave the title “Third Wave” to the movement centered in the Vineyard churches that began in the 1980s. While they affirm that God does give all the gifts mentioned in the NT (they are continuationists), their major distinctive has been an emphasis on signs and wonders, especially in evangelism. The title “Third Wave” presupposes the Pentecostal movement as the First Wave and Charsmatics as the Second Wave, but it has not been nearly as widespread or influential as either of its predecessors.

5. Pentecostal Characteristics. Though there is great variety within the Pentecostal movement, there are some general characteristics.

a. They are usually orthodox, conservative Christians. They agree with most evangelicals on most doctrines, other than the Holy Spirit.

b. Their worship is highly emotional, spontaneous, and free. Today many non-Pentecostal churches have adopted some of their worship practices, but the Pentecostals go further than most others (especially in the use of tongues in worship).

c. They believe in miracles and expect them as a normal part of worship (cures, exorcism of demons, etc.).

d. In the past, they often emphasized radical separation from the world, involving things like makeup, hair, dress, entertainment, and tithing, showing their "holiness church" background. This seems to be waning in some Pentecostal groups today.

e. Generally, Pentecostal churches seem reluctant to cooperate with each other. This may be due to a desire by some Pentecostal pastors to center authority in themselves and avoid entering into contexts where his authority could be examined and challenged.

Charismatics differed in their origin in that they tended to remain within their established churches, and so often supplemented their church attendance with participation in a small group that agreed with them concerning the Spirit. Today, however, there are many independent charismatic churches unconnected to any denomination. Again, in their earlier days, they tended to be different socio-economically, in that they were much more drawn from the middle and upper classes and had much less emphasis on separation from the world than mainline Pentecostals, but that difference is waning. They share the emphasis on tongues and baptism, though they seem less dogmatic than Pentecostals. Overall, the differences between charismatics and Pentecostals seem to be decreasing.

E. Evaluation of Pentecostals/Charismatics. In the aftermath of the First Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards wrote what has become a classic work, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*. In that work, he defended the Awakening against the charges that it was simply shallow emotionalism and listed five distinguishing marks of a true work of the Spirit: (1) it exalts Christ as Savior and Lord and leads people to honor him as such, (2) it leads to holier living and opposition to Satan and sin, (3) it leads people to study God's word, (4) it leads to heartfelt concern for the spiritual welfare and eternal destiny of themselves and others, and (5) it leads to love for Christ and others.

Despite its defects and doctrinal difficulties, overall the Pentecostal movement, especially the charismatic version of the last 35 years, has had these marks and thus should be judged as "from God." Evangelicals should presume Pentecostal and charismatic brothers and sisters are just that, until and unless they reveal heretical beliefs touching central issues of salvation (such as in the United Pentecostal Church, which in effect denies the Trinity). At the same time, we pray for their maturation, and see some hopeful signs along those lines, as some charismatics

have dropped the teaching that all should speak with tongues or that they are the necessary evidence of the baptism of the Spirit.

III. Theological Formulation. It is difficult to formulate our theology about the Spirit for he is truly like the wind. He is free and sovereign. We must therefore:

A. Let the Spirit be free and sovereign. Do not be too quick to say, "The Spirit can't do this, shouldn't do that." He is the Sovereign One. He is not under our control; we are under his. Certainly, we should have convictions about gifts, and sanctification and such, but we should also make room for the freedom of the Spirit.

B. Test the spirits (I John 4:1). While we cannot pin the Spirit down, we are given marks to discern his true work. In addition to those given by Edwards, I offer these three:

1. The Spirit and the Word. Since the Spirit is the ultimate author of Scripture, he will never lead or act contrary to an express command of Scripture.

2. The Spirit and Christ. The Spirit's desire is to glorify Christ (John 16:14). Thus, anyone claiming to act under the Spirit's control but glorifying self is deceived.

3. The Spirit and Fruit. Where we see the Spirit's fruit, we have reason to conclude that there the Spirit is at work.

IV. Practical Applications.

A. Walking in the Power of the Spirit. On a personal level, I believe that there are three keys to experiencing the power of the Spirit. As I explained earlier, allowing the Spirit to be holy and allowing Him to be sovereign are the two conditions to being filled with the Spirit. To those two, I would add simply faith (John 7:37-39). We receive the power of the Spirit, not by pleading or begging, or lingering at some altar, but by coming to Christ and trusting Him. We are then to act in faith, believing God is with us and will empower us.

Nor should we limit ourselves to one experience. The verbs in John 7:37-39 are present: continually come, continually drink. As often as we need power, so often should we come and seek it from Christ.

B. Responding to Explosive Situations. As pastors and church leaders, we need to ponder this situation. Suppose next week, a member of your church says, "I think I have received the gift of tongues." How will you respond?

I would want to talk with this individual, find out what happened, why they think they have this gift. Perhaps they are deceived, or were in a group where others were speaking in tongues and felt such pressure that they made themselves speak in tongues. Then I would review I Cor. 14 with them, noting the dangers associated with this gift and the restrictions placed upon its exercise in the local church assembly. If they come to think they have a message for the

church, let them understand how you will respond. I would require that there be an interpreter, and that I hear the message and interpretation before it is given to the church. Such a situation is far from impossible, and deserves some consideration.

C. Praying for Pentecostal and Charismatic Brothers and Sisters. On a more general level, we need to pray for Pentecostals and Charismatics. They have tremendous potential for the cause of Christ around the world, and could blight that potential through theological error. We need to regard them as brothers and sisters in the Lord, seek to explain our understanding of the Spirit's gifts and baptisms gently and respectfully, learn from them regarding openness to the Spirit, and pray for their maturation. I doubt we will ever resolve all our differences, but I hope we do come to a day where there is less distrust and more mutual respect.

THE 6120 CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY II

CLASS LECTURE NOTES

JOHN S. HAMMETT, PH.D.

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY II

CLASS LECTURE NOTES

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#1

SOUTHEASTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE DESTINY OF THOSE WHO NEVER HEAR: A PRESENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THREE VIEWS

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY I
T3000

NOVEMBER 17, 1999

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Introduction

This paper will present three views of the destiny of those who never hear the gospel. This presentation will include both encapsulation and evaluation of each of the views. Within the concluding section there will be a summary of each view and a final evaluation of the viability of each view.

The three views handled in this paper are termed restrictivism, inclusivism and universalism. While this is not an exhaustive list of the possible positions regarding the selected topic, it is a broad one. Each of these views contains its own Biblical and historical bases as well as its own theological and practical implications. These four areas will comprise the structure under which each view will be presented and evaluated.

Restrictivism

The restrictivist position claims that "God does not provide salvation to those who fail to hear of Jesus and come to faith in him before they die."[1] This position is clearly the most closed position of the three enumerated in this paper. In short this position claims that those who never hear the gospel cannot be saved.

Biblical Bases

There are three main Scriptural bases by which this position is substantiated. One passage is Jn 14:6. Ronald Nash holds this passage as important to the cause of restrictivism because it claims that Jesus is the only way to the Father.[2] This verse does contribute positively to the cause of the restrictivists mainly because of its context. In the following verse the context

[1] Gabriel Fackre, Ronald H. Nash, and John Sanders, *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?: Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized,* ed. John Sanders (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 20.

suggests that Jesus was not describing Himself as a gate that someone could enter through apart from knowing Him. The importance of knowing Jesus is distinctive of the restrictivist position. However, it is important to note that this verse was given by Jesus to his followers concerning their own salvation and not in response to a question concerning those who have never heard of Him.

A second key passage for the restrictivist position is Ac 4:12. Ronald Nash also holds this passage as key to the restrictivist position because it affirms the necessity of Christ for salvation.[3] Pinnock affirms Nash's understanding by claiming that this verse holds Christ as the authority by which men are saved but he differs with Nash by arguing that one can be under the authority of one not known by name.[4] The same advantages and disadvantages hold for this verse that held for Jn 14:6. Positively, this verse affirms the necessity of Christ being given to men for salvation; negatively the statement is made to those who had the opportunity to respond to the gospel.

One final key passage is 1 Jn 5:11-12.[5] These verses claim that one must have Jesus in order to be saved. These verses carry great weight for the restrictivist position because they draw a clear line for salvation that splits people into two groups: those with Jesus and those without Him. However on a negative note, these verses simply do not totally rule out the possibility of someone having Christ and not knowing it.

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[2] Ibid., 131.
[3] Ibid.
[4] William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos, *Through No Fault of Their Own?: The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard,* ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 109.
[5] Fackre, Nash, and Sanders, 20.

Historical Bases

One modern adherent to this position is Ronald Nash. There are two key points to be drawn from Nash's work. One is that the general tenor of Scripture requires both faith and knowledge to effect salvation.[6] The problem with this point is that this same statement may be made regarding a hypothetical "someone" who comes to salvation through general revelation. If there were such a person, they would know something about God and believe that knowledge apart from hearing the gospel. A second related point is that none of the saved in both the Old and New Testaments were clearly saved apart from special revelation.[7] While there may be no clear case of salvation apart from special revelation in the Bible, this still does not preclude this as a possibility. After all, it is possible that those who are saved apart from special revelation may never make it into the record of special revelation. It seems that anyone mentioned in special revelation would automatically be placed under the tent of special revelation by the restrictivists.

There is also some evidence in favor of the restrictivist position from early Christianity. One such piece of evidence is that Emperor Julian ridiculed Christians because of their claims of exclusivity.[8] This fact coupled with the persecution of Christians for their beliefs lends credence to the restrictivist position because it appears that the early Christians considered those remaining in other religions as outside of salvation. Many early Christians preferred death to worshipping anything other than the God of Christianity. Given this fact it is possible to see how early Christians could easily have been restrictivists. While early Christian belief is not determinative, it is worthy of consideration.

One final area of consideration for the restrictivist position comes from those between the early Christian and modern eras. One such consideration comes from the classic statement on

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[6] Ibid., 115.
[7] Ibid.

salvation by Cyprian. Cyprian said that one could not have God for his Father unless one has the church as his mother.[9] This was clearly a restrictivist position when it was originally made. While this idea was held throughout most of church history, it goes beyond the requirement of a gospel response to a church response. Today Cyprian's statement holds only limited value for Roman Catholics in defending the restrictivist position because of the Church's change in their understanding of who comprises church.[10] It also holds limited value for Protestants because of their rejection of the necessity of one particular church as the dispenser of salvation. Nevertheless, Cyprian's original statement included the idea of a restriction of salvation to those who were in the Church.

Another key figure from this era is Augustine. It is appropriate to classify Augustine as a restrictivist under the definition given above.[11] He said that there were three types of individuals in the world. There are those who never hear the gospel and are lost, those who hear the gospel and are lost and those who hear the gospel and are saved.[12] In Augustine's understanding of "gospel" he included special revelation of a saving nature as a possibility for those who never hear the gospel from humans.[13] An advantage of this position is that it fits well with Scriptural data concerning people who likely were saved apart from human testimony, such as Job and Melchizedek.

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[8] Crockett and Sigountos, 230.
[9] Millard J. Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved?: The Destiny of Those Who Do Not Hear of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 34.
[10] Ibid., 110.
[11] Fackre, Nash, and Sanders, 20.
[12] Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved?*, 37.
[13] Ibid., 36.

Theological Implications

Erickson argues that the issue of this paper is doctrinally significant in a number of areas.[14] One's understanding of restrictivism affects one's understanding of both God's love and His Justice. One persuasive element of the idea of restrictivism is its well-balanced idea of God's love and justice. This position allows for both to be exhibited, justice for all who never hear the gospel and love for those who hear and accept the gospel. While there is a perceptible balance in this area, there is also concern by some like John Sanders that it would be unloving for God to hold people responsible for a gospel which they have never heard.[15] This theological question is one in which there is a necessary tension. In the final analysis of this issue, restrictivism should be seen as one of several possibilities because it does in fact maintain a balance of God's justice and love.

Another theological issue critically tied to the issue of this paper is that of soteriology.[16] The main question in this area dealt with by restrictivism is the amount of knowledge one must have to be saved. As stated above Nash affirms the requirement of both faith and knowledge for salvation.[17] While Nash advocates the necessity of gospel knowledge, others like Sanders hold that there is Biblical evidence of saved individuals with different levels of knowledge throughout history.[18] This Biblical fact is a most detrimental blow to the restrictivist position. It is abundantly clear from Scripture that throughout time God revealed more of Himself to His people and that different individuals were saved with different amounts of knowledge. One weakness of the restrictivist position is that it adopts a standard of knowledge required for salvation that has increased through time while it has not accounted for those who are trapped in

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[14] Ibid., 13-19.
[15] Fackre, Nash, and Sanders, 22.
[16] Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved?*, 16.
[17] Fackre, Nash, and Sanders, 115.

a theological time warp apart from special revelation. While it makes sense that someone with increased understanding is responsible for that heightened understanding, it is more difficult to see why someone with less or no special revelation cannot be saved by responding to what they do have. This is especially pertinent if the individual is responding to a level of special revelation by which people were saved in the past. Should these people be penalized for only responding to what they know if it is less than the gospel of Jesus Christ? The restrictivists say yes; inclusivists and universalists say no.

Practical Implications

Evangelism and missions are key practical implications of the restrictivist position. These two endeavors are seen by some restrictivists to be tied directly to an understanding of the lostness of those who have never heard; others like Sanders emphasize that they are commands and not pragmatic matters.[19] One can certainly see the impetus provided by the restrictivist position to these two endeavors but the question remains whether or not this is the correct motivation. The conclusion of this matter is that while positions other than the restrictivist position may adversely affect evangelistic and missiological endeavors, this is ultimately the result of an improper response to the Bible's commands in these areas.

One final practical implication of the restrictivist position is found in the area of apologetics. Apologetic and restrictivist concerns converge as one dialogues with nonbelievers concerning the doomed fate of the lost who never hear the gospel. The restrictivist position presents extra difficulty in this area because of its hard stance against those who never hear. While this is not

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[18] Ibid., 38.
[19] Ibid., 53.

an insuperable problem, it does place more tension on the human mind as one strives to understand the balance of God's love and justice.

Inclusivism

The inclusivist position claims that "the unevangelized may be saved if they respond in faith to God based on the revelation they have."[20] This position is more open than the restrictivist position but not as open as universalism. In short this position claims that God only holds individuals accountable to what they have received concerning Him. Much of the basis for the inclusivist position is derived from an optimistic view of general revelation. Once the efficacy of general revelation has been accepted then the other concerns can be dealt with. The inclusivist section of this paper will present both the inclusivist position on general revelation as well as how that position affects their view of what will happen to those who never hear the gospel.

Biblical Bases

There are two main passages from which the inclusivist position on the efficacy of general revelation can be seen. The first is Psalm 19 from which advocates of this position derive their understanding that there is true knowledge of God available in nature. This understanding comes from Ps 19:3 in which the heavens and the skies daily display knowledge. This is important to their position because inclusivists believe that some knowledge of God is necessary for salvation but that the extent of that knowledge can vary.[21] Delitzsch notes that this Psalm shows God's faithfulness in both law and nature.[22] Because this Psalm claims that knowledge flows from

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[20] Ibid., 20.
[21] Ibid., 38.
[22] Franz Delitzsch, *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms,* trans. David Eaton and James E. Duguid, vol. 1 (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883), 357.

God's creation, it is a passage that is beneficial to the inclusivist idea of general revelation. It is also a favorable passage for their position because it claims that the knowledge it displays is heard by all who dwell in the earth. Barth claims that v. 3 should be understood as saying that the speech spoken by the creation is not efficacious.[23] While there are numerous disagreements concerning the meaning of the "voice" in Psalm 19, the clearest and most direct meaning of the passage is that some knowledge of God is available in creation.

The second passages important for understanding the efficacy of general revelation held by inclusivists are Ro 1:18-21 and 2:7-15. In the first passage it is clear that people have seen and understood some of God's invisible qualities from creation. This is of great value to the inclusivists because it shows how some true knowledge about God is possible from creation. It is key for the inclusivists to note that what follows this passage might only describe those who have suppressed the truth and does not mean that all men have suppressed the truth.[24] In the second passage it is clear that even those who do not have the law in written form did have it available to them in their hearts. Sanders, an inclusivist, sees v. 7 of the second passage not as a hypothetical situation but as a real possibility for salvation.[25] While this is an inclusivist position, one can also choose to see v. 7 as a hypothetical argument. If this second course is taken then one can see the efficacy of general revelation as similar to that of the law insofar as both serve as schoolmasters to bring people to a salvific response. In this case those who never hear are convicted by the law on their hearts to turn to the God of creation. Barth argues that Romans 1-2 does not pertain to those who never hear the gospel because it is found within the

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[23] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God,* ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. T. H. L. Parker et al., vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 112.
[24] Fackre, Nash and Sanders, 49.
[25] Ibid., 46.

context of special revelation.[26] Once again it seems that the most straightforward reading of the text is better than Barth's. Just because a passage is within the larger framework of an argument doesn't mean that its clearly stated information is invaluable beyond the scope of the particular argument being made.

The above understanding of Psalm 19 bears direct influence on another critical passage for this position, Ro 10:13-18. This is a very difficult passage to interpret because it sets up an argument in one direction and then seems to conclude with a statement contrary to the argument developed. In vv. 13-17 Paul argues that it is necessary for one to respond to the gospel message to be saved. However, in v. 18 he seems to contradict the necessity of hearing the gospel by quoting from Psalm 19. The word "Israel" is not found in v. 18 of the Greek manuscripts, but it is in v. 19.[27] This means that v. 19 is surely about Israel while v. 18 might or might not be based on one's contextual interpretation. Upon close examination, this very difficult passage does not preclude the possibility of the inclusivist position.

Other passages that the inclusivists claim bolster their stance are Mt 25:37-39 and Jn 10:16. In Mt 25:37-39 Sanders, an inclusivist, claims that the surprise of the righteous shows that they had no idea that they were of Christ's fold until the end of time.[28] This is not a particularly convincing argument for one main reason. The surprise of the righteous is not due to the fact that they belonged to Christ but rather that doing things for someone other than Christ was counted as being done toward Christ. Jn 10:16 is employed by inclusivists to show that there are flocks outside of the scope of the gospel who belong to Christ.[29] Although this is not as weak a claim as the last one, it is weak because the inclusivists' claim is not explicit in the text. While the

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[26] Barth, 107.
[27] Barbara Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament,* 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1998), 547.
[28] Fackre, Nash and Sanders, 34.
[29] Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved?,* 123-126.

sheep outside the pen may refer to those who have not heard the gospel, it is more likely a reference to gentiles being saved by the gospel. In conclusion, the inclusivist position is one that is better substantiated by an understanding of the efficacy of general revelation than by proof texts specifically showing the position. This is why the majority of this section dealt with the efficacy question.

Historical Bases

In the early church one of the most prominent adherents to this position is Justin Martyr. Justin claimed that there were those in antiquity who suffered for opposing false religions much the same way that Christians suffered for their faith.[30] While this did not mean that they were Christians, Justin was showing the great price paid by some who have sought what they thought was the true God. Justin also advances the notion of the "spermatikos logos" which suggests that those who don't have the gospel are not privy to full revelation yet they can know enough to be saved.[31] Justin's position is clearly dependent upon the efficacy of general revelation discussed above.

Barth is a key theologian opposed to natural theology and thus worthy of consideration here. His argument can be seen on two important levels. First, he claims that Paul expected revelation and not natural theology to show the way to salvation.[32] While Paul does place great emphasis on special revelation and the gospel, it seems improper to take that understanding and to employ it in rejecting the inclusivist position. The absence of a direct condemnation of the inclusivist position in Scripture precludes reading against it in questionable passages based on that absence alone. Second, Barth argues that believing in natural theology gives too much credit to the

[30] Crockett and Sigountos, 233.
[31] Ibid., 239-40.

reason of fallen man.[33] While it is certain that man is fallen and that as such he is not perfectly able to reason all things, he is still able to understand what God enables him to. It seems clear from passages like Romans 1-2 that there is a real possibility of accurate knowledge of God from creation.

Another proponent of inclusivism is A. H. Strong who asserts that a response to what has been revealed to an individual is effective for salvation just as the Old Testament believers were saved by responding to an incomplete knowledge of God.[34] This is a very convincing argument for the inclusivist position. It is difficult to see how gospel knowledge can be the determining factor in salvation when many Old Testament believers were saved by responding to the light that they had. Sanders further speaks to this argument by showing the different levels of knowledge possessed by the believers found in Hebrews 11.[35] Strong further qualifies his position by claiming that all who are saved by responding to the light they have will accept Christ if ever presented with the opportunity.[36] This is a key point because it doesn't open wide the floodgates to God's kingdom beyond what one would expect from Scripture passages like Mt 7:14. This more guarded view of the numbers of people saved through general revelation fits better with Scripture than the more optimistic view of Sanders.[37]

One of Clark Pinnock's arguments in favor of the inclusivist position will be the last considered here. He argues that if general revelation contains enough truth to condemn, then it is also contains enough truth to save individuals who respond to it.[38] It is clear from passages like Ro 1:18-32 that general revelation is enough to condemn individuals but moving from there to its

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[32] Barth, 102.
[33] Ibid., 105.
[34] Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved?*, 122-123.
[35] Fackre, Nash and Sanders, 38.
[36] Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved?*, 122-123.
[37] Fackre, Nash and Sanders, 32.
[38] Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved?*, 133.

efficacy for salvation is not explicitly stated in Scripture. This fact makes this issue a difficult one to evaluate. At its best this argument is based on the line of reasoning presented above where general revelation is seen as a schoolmaster to bring individuals to a positive response to God. In this form the argument is quite valuable. At its worst this argument is based on a logical human understanding of what fairness is. In this form the argument is less valuable because there are several issues, like the existence of evil, which certainly exist and yet baffle human reason. Simply the fact that something baffles human understanding is not enough to tip the scales in favor of another view.

Theological Implications

Two interrelated areas that are affected by the inclusivist position are the doctrines of Scripture and salvation. This view impacts the doctrine of Scripture by addressing the perspective one should take in reading the Scriptures. The perspective used by the inclusivists sees traditionally restrictivist passages as speaking to general truth and not specific application. For example, the restrictivists see passages like 1 Jn 5:12 as showing the necessity of believing in Christ for salvation.[39] The inclusivists see them as affirming the general truth that only Christ can save but that specifically hearing of Him is not needed. This difference in the perspective taken in reading Scripture is significant. The conclusion of this matter is that while the restrictivists' favor for the most plain reading of such passages is valuable, it must be remembered that the Scriptures were written to those who had the gospel and a culture that was about to hear the gospel.

The second major implication of the inclusivist position involves the area of soteriology. The inclusivists impact this area specifically concerning the issue of what exactly one must know to

be saved. Obviously the restrictivists hold that one must respond to the gospel while the inclusivists hold that some response to God is required based only on the amount of truth they have received. The exact content of this response varies within the inclusivist position. Among the least stringent positions is that of Karl Rahner. Rahner holds that the minimum requirement is the acceptance that there is a God.[40] A more closed position is that of A. H. Strong who holds that individuals must respond to what they have received but that only those who would receive Christ if given with the opportunity are saved.[41] This variety of positions is to be expected based on the definition of inclusivism given above. Among the variety of positions within inclusivism, the "hypothetical gospel response" position of Strong fits better with Scripture.

One final theological implication of the inclusivist position concerns the doctrine of man and the sovereignty of God. Calvin was not an inclusivist but the implications for these two areas can be seen from his notion of the "spectacles of faith." Calvin held that one could not clearly see God in creation until one was exposed to the gospel and thus special revelation.[42] For him this clearly involved the fallen nature of man and the sovereignty of God. The inclusivist position is not by definition in opposition to Calvin's view of man and God's sovereignty, though it does differ by not requiring one to hear the gospel for salvation. The inclusivist position can be squared with the Calvinistic position on reason. This can be accomplished if inclusivists believe that it is not on the basis of human ability that individuals respond to any salvific truth they have received. The inclusivist position can also be squared with the Calvinistic position on the sovereignty of God in salvation. This can happen if inclusivists hold

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[39] Fackre, Nash and Sanders, 65.
[40] Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved?*, 113.
[41] Ibid., 122-23.
[42] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 196.

that God's regenerating power is the reason for any response to the truth. This line of reasoning shows the possibility of a limited synthesis of both the Calvinistic and inclusivist positions.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of the inclusivist position include the area of missions and evangelism.[43] The issue is whether or not holding the inclusivist position will hinder efforts in these two areas. The concern raised by inclusivists like Sanders is that missiological and evangelistic endeavors should be undertaken because of the Bible's commands in these areas and not because of some pragmatic argument.[44] This is a valuable point because the Biblical perspective is one that requires submission to the commands found in the Bible and not acceptance of only those commands that have a good pragmatic basis. The issue of adhering to the commands of the Bible is directly related to submission to God and should not be hindered by pragmatic concerns. This question is also less severe in nature when inclusivism is not confused with the next position, universalism. The argument in inclusivism is not that everyone is saved but rather that some may be saved apart from the gospel.[45] One final aspect of these implications is that while some may be saved apart from the gospel, this does not mean that their relationship with God is as full as it could be if they had special revelation. Perhaps this fuller relationship is the impetus behind God's command to spread the gospel. In conclusion, while speculation concerning God's reasons for commands is thought provoking, it should not become the reason for following His commands.

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[43] Fackre, Nash and Sanders, 7-8.
[44] Ibid., 53.

Universalism

The universalist position claims that "All people will in fact be saved by Jesus. No one is damned forever."[46] This position is the most open of the three presented in this paper. In short this position claims that no one will ultimately be lost.

Biblical Bases

Three key passages will be presented in this section from which universalists derive their understanding of what will happen to those who never hear the gospel. The first is 1 Co 15:22-28. In this passage v. 22 is the key for the universalist position. This verse is understood to show that as death is universal as a result of Adam's actions, so life is universal as a result of Christ's actions. Were this verse to be found in isolation, apart from a context, it would be a very convincing argument for universalism. The unfortunate fact for the universalists is that this verse cannot be interpreted apart from the context of the rest of Scripture. In fact it cannot be interpreted apart from the context of the next verse. In v. 23 it is clear that those who will be made alive are those who belong to Christ, not every single person. The direct context of v. 23 as well as the context of 1 Corinthians and the rest of the Bible severely damage the universalistic interpretation of 1 Co 15:22.

The second passage to examine is 1 Jn 2:2. The universalist interpretation of this passage sees the efficacy of the atoning sacrifice of Christ as indicating universal atonement.[47] Once again, if this verse were all one had it would be possible to interpret it universalistically but the context of 1 John makes this unlikely. This book is mainly about having assurance of salvation.

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[45] Ibid., 151-155.
[46] Ibid., 20.
[47] Timothy K. Beougher, "Are All Doomed to Be Saved?: The Rise of Modern Universalism," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 2 (Summer 1998): 10.

This assurance is not explained using arguments showing that all are saved but rather that those who have the Son have life. The very fact that the book was written this way shows that everyone is not saved automatically by Christ.

The third passage is Ro 11:32. In this passage some universalists, like Dodd, argue that just as all men are bound to disobedience, all will be saved.[48] This is countered by some, like Hafemann, who argue that the "all" here refers to mankind and not all individuals.[49] The pattern developed in the first two passages above continues here. Apart from the Biblical context this verse would be convincing but in light of other passages such as Ro 5:1, 6:8 and 8:1 it seems clear that there are some in Christ and some apart from Him.

One particular passage opposed to the universalist position is 2 Th 1:6-10.[50] This passage is very clear in its position that those who have not obeyed the gospel will be punished eternally. The alleged Biblical basis for the universalistic position is clearly contradicted by Scripture. This leaves the universalists with two options. They can choose to believe that Scripture contains errors which explain the passages that oppose their position or they can choose to interpret the clearer passages opposed to their position in light of their less clear passages. Both are poor positions to hold. In the first case, Scripture itself and the nature of God ensure that the Bible is without error. In the second, it makes little sense to interpret more clear passages in line with those that are less clear. In conclusion, the Biblical bases for the universalist position are difficult to maintain in light of the rest of Scripture.

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[48] Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved?*, 67.
[49] Timothy George et al., "The *SBJT* Forum: Responses to Inclusivism," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 2 (Summer 1998): 56.
[50] Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved?*, 75.

Historical Bases

Similar to the other two positions presented in this paper, the universalist position has adherents stemming back to the early church. One such advocate is Origen who held that all people would eventually be subjected to Christ; he also holds that hell is a place for purification and not a place of eternal punishment.[51] The idea that God will eventually restore all of His creation is comforting but simply not based on Scripture. One specific text that counters Origen's position is Mk 9:48 where the Lord himself explains that hell is a place where the fire is not quenched and the worm doesn't die. While the meaning of this verse is disputed, its context concerns humans destined for hell and counters Origen's position.

Another advocate of this position is John A. T. Robinson. He claims that purely retributive justice is not in line with God's love.[52] This argument is based largely on the adoption of love as the central characteristic of God and then using that understanding to interpret the rest of the Bible. This position is simply not consistent with the rest of Scripture. In Rv 20:11-15, it is clear that the dead will be judged based on what they have done and then doomed to the lake of fire unless their names are found in the book of life. From this passage one can see that purely retributive justice is consistent with Scripture. While God's love has made a way for some who are found written in the book of life, the rest are damned as retribution for their deeds.

One last theologian to consider in the universalistic field is Schliermacher. He held that all men are elected to salvation and so universalism is the correct position to hold.[53] Once again this position is unacceptable for anyone who holds an inerrant view of Scripture. In Ro 9:10-24 there is a clear understanding that all men are not of the elect. This is not to be seen as unjust because

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[51] Beougher, 8.
[52] Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved?*, 71.
[53] Beougher, 8.

God is God and can do as He desires. The major problem with the historical bases for universalism is that the position is not taken from a comprehensive view of Scripture.

Theological Implications

The major theological implication of the universalist position concerns the understanding of God's characteristics. The main characteristics in view are the balance of God's love and His justice. The universalists, like Ferre, assert that condemning a person to hell would be contradictory to God's love.[54] This position relies heavily on a human evaluation and not the Biblical data of what perfect love and justice look like. The locus of the argument is too centralized in the human understanding to be of much value. In holding their position the universalists originate their own understanding of what love is and then force Scripture into that definition.[55] As one considers what the perfect balance of love and justice would look like, the difficulty of the situation becomes apparent. On the one hand, if God were only just then all people would be damned forever for that is what all men deserve; but then where is the love? On the other hand, if God were only love then all men would have eternal life; but then where is the justice? Simply thinking about these two extremes leads one to some middle ground on the continuum. What the Bible describes is consistent with what one would expect given a human understanding of what a combination of love and justice would look like. While one may arrive at a proper understanding of a combination of love and justice from human reasoning, the conclusion of this matter is that the Bible affirms that God's love and justice are both perfect. This perfect combination is not what is found in the universalist position.

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[54] Ibid., 11.
[55] George et al., 59.

The universalist position also involves the doctrine of salvation. While the other two positions presented in this paper required some form of response in the earthly life for salvation, the universalist position alters that understanding. Origen affirmed that all would eventually voluntarily submit themselves to Christ.[56] Of course this would require that those who are, in his view, purified in hell make some sort of response after death. Once again this reasoning flies in the face of the Biblical understanding of the finality of death for determining eternal destiny. In Hb 9:27-28 the Bible is clear that men die once and then are judged. Perhaps this verse by itself could be interpreted universalistically but the comparison is with Christ's sacrifice. This fact shows the finality of the judgement pronounced upon man after this life. The Biblical understanding is that salvation is something that must be received in this life if it is to be received at all.

Practical Implications

Similar to the other two positions presented in this paper, universalism impacts evangelism and missions. The universalistic position differs from the other two in this paper in that it can result in false hope for the lost in other religions. The restrictivist position obviously claims all must respond to Christ. While allowing for the salvation of some who have never heard, the inclusivist position does claim that if one does hear of the gospel that they must respond to it to be saved. The universalistic position is different in that it does not hold that one must respond to the gospel or even the correct God in this life to be saved. This fact has an extremely negative impact on evangelism and missions as found in the Bible because it allows people to have a false hope of the possibility of salvation after death.

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[56] Beougher, 8.

One final area of practical implication is in the area of ministry. The preaching done by universalists often concerns temporal issues.[57] This is unfortunate given the fact that eternity exists and the current existence cannot be correctly understood apart from an eternal perspective. This is particularly the case when considering the issue of death and dying.[58] The fact that death will be something experienced by virtually all of those who have ever lived shows its import as an area of ministry. The burden of death for the grieving is certainly eased if the issues of eternity are dealt with before the moment arrives. Universalism doesn't provide as much impetus for such ministry as the other two positions presented in this paper.

Conclusion

This paper presented and evaluated three views of what will happen to those who never hear the gospel. While this paper has not been an exhaustive presentation of positions, it has presented three positions that range from no optimism to some optimism to full optimism regarding the fate of the unevangelized. The most closed position presented was restrictivism. In presenting and evaluating this position four conclusions can be drawn. First, this position has a strong yet not conclusive Biblical basis and yields to the simplest readings of Scripture in most cases. Second, restrictivists through the years have presented compelling cases for their position and some, like the early Christian martyrs, have acted in line with their convictions on this matter. Third, theologically this position held a balance of God's love and justice as well as a soteriology that limits salvation to only those who respond to the gospel. Fourth, restrictivism gives a solid practical basis for missions and evangelism but leaves some difficult questions in apologetics.

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[57] Ibid., 14.
[58] Ibid.

The middle position presented in this paper was inclusivism. Once again four conclusions can be drawn. First, inclusivism is permissible on a Biblical basis although the preferred readings are not as straight forward as those of the restrictivists. Second, the historical bases for the inclusivists are compelling, especially in light of the knowledge required for salvation in the Old Testament. Third, the theological implications of inclusivism can be correlated with some claims of Calvinism and involve reading Scripture on different levels. Fourth, inclusivism does seem to have a negative impact on missions and evangelism but only insofar as individuals participate in those endeavors on a pragmatic basis.

The final position considered was universalism, the most open of the three. Here also four conclusions can be made. First, the Biblical bases of universalism are largely dependent on a forced reading of certain texts outside their immediate and general contexts. Second, universalism has had many historical bases but upon close examination those bases do not line up with the general understanding of Scripture. Third, universalism does not do justice to the balance of God's attributes of love and justice. Fourth, this position is a danger to the areas of evangelism and missions because it permits people the opportunity to rely on a second chance after death.

In the final analysis, two of the views presented are viable options while one is not. Universalism is not a viable option given its poor interpretation of Scripture. Although at first glance the Biblical bases for this position seem viable, they are surely not when context is brought into consideration. The universalistic position is valuable in its limit to salvation ultimately by Christ but fails in the other areas investigated in this paper. It is not a potential position for those who hold to the inerrancy of Scripture. Neither is it valuable in dealing with the characteristics of God or the evangelistic cause.

Both restrictivism and inclusivism can be squared with the Biblical data and thus are viable. Each has its positives and negatives. Restrictivism is valuable because of its commitment to the plain reading of Scripture and the impetus it provides for spreading the gospel. It is not as valuable in its closed stance on salvation given the salvation of some apart from the full gospel in the Old Testament. Neither is it as valuable in handling the difficult apologetic question of the condemnation of all who never hear the gospel. Inclusivism is valuable in its consideration of the possibility of salvation by Christ outside special revelation given the Old Testament salvations already mentioned. It is not as valuable in its less straightforward readings of Scripture and its potential negative impact on evangelism and missions. The final conclusion of this paper is that both restrictivism and inclusivism are valuable positions and that neither can be conclusively eliminated from consideration.

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#1

SOUTHEASTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR HEADSHIP FROM GENESIS 1-3

PAPER SUBMITTED TO
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T300 SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY I

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INTRODUCTION

In 1998, the Southern Baptist Convention voted on the largely debated issue of the role of the woman in the family.[1] It seems that during the 1990's this issue has received more attention than at any time in the past. Thus, the reason for this paper is to summarize the differing opinions on the roles of men and women. There are two primary views on this issue, the complementarian view and the egalitarian view. This paper will attempt to clarify this issue by discussing the beliefs of each view as it is related to their theological foundation from the first three chapters of Genesis. Finally this paper will conclude with a personal opinion from the culmination of the research and a conclusion to sum up the main points. This paper will eventually show that the complementarian view has a stronger biblical foundation from the first three chapters of Genesis and should be adopted over the egalitarian view which demonstrates a false view of the complementarian position and at times an inaccurate interpretation of Scripture.

THE COMPLEMENTARIAN POSITION

Although much energy is being expended today to minimize the distinctions between men and women, the complementary position is not supportive of this. John Piper, an advocate of the complementarian position holds that "manhood and womanhood are the beautiful handiwork of a good and loving God. He designed our differences and they are profound."[2] The complementary position holds that men and women "are in every respect God's creatures and of equal value, but

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[1]Doglas Groothuis and Rebecca Groothuis, "Southern Baptists and the Subordination of Women." [journal on-line] (Minneapolis, Minesotta: Christians for Biblical Equality, 1998, accessed 29 November 1999); available from http://cbeinternational.org/goothuisSBC.htm.

[2]John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991), 32.

in their being they are fundamentally distinct."[3] Complementarianism holds that the distinctions between men and women greatly affect their role relationships, which is supported in both the Old and New Testaments.[4] The husband is called to be the head, and the wife is called to submit. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* defines biblical headship as the divine calling for the husband "to take primary responsibility for Christlike, servant leadership, protection and provision in the home. Biblical submission for the wife is the divine calling to honor and affirm her husband's leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts."[5]

The first book in the Old Testament, Genesis, discusses the role relationships of men and women. According to Mary Kassian, a complementarian, "an understanding of creation is central to a correct understanding of male and female roles, as all biblical teaching on roles is contingent on this historic event. Gender roles are rooted in the created order, and apart from this context, cannot be understood."[6]

The first creation narrative, which is found in Genesis 1:26-27, does not say much about the roles of men and women. Stephen Clark says in *Man and Woman in Christ* that "the passage is not concerned with differences between men and women or with the implications of those differences."[7] Instead, Genesis 1 is a summary of the entire act of creation, including the creation

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[3]Werner Neuer, *Man and Woman in Christian Perspective*. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991), 23.

[4]George W. Knight III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women*. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1985), vii.

[5]Piper, 52-53.

[6]Mary A. Kassian, *Women, Creation and the Fall*. (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1990), 13.

[7]Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1980), 14.

of male and female.[8] The primary focus of this passage is the fact that both man and woman are equally created in the image of God.[9] Both man and woman are in the image of God in exactly the same way.[10]

The second creation narrative, which is found in Genesis 2, includes a more developed treatment of the two sexes and their relationship. Stephen Clark says, "it would not be wrong to say that the central concern of at least verses 18-25 in Genesis 2 is the relationship of men and women."[11] This passage contains strong support for the complementarian position of male headship.

The first piece of support for male headship found in Genesis 2 is the fact that the male is the center and the subject of the entire Genesis 2 narrative. All of the actions and events of the chapter revolve around the man.[12] Jack Cottrell demonstrates this in detail in his book *Gender Roles and the Bible: Creation, the Fall, and Redemption.*

> The male is the first to be created (2:7). The garden is prepared for him, and he is placed within it (2:8). The male, not the female is given the name — the generic name — borne for the entire human race as a whole (2:5). The male is the one to whom God speaks in the narrative (2:16); he is the first to receive divine revelation and instruction. The animals are brought for naming to the male, not the female (2:19-20). The woman is made from the man, not the male from the woman (2:22). The woman is also made for the man and brought to him, not vice versa (2:18-22). Afterward it is the man who speaks and makes a theological comment upon the woman's creation, not vice versa (2:23). It is the male who

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[8]Kassian, 14.

[9]Neur, 67.

[10]Susan Foh, *Woman and the Word of God.* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1979), 51.

[11]Clark, 15.

[12]Jack Cottrell, *Gender Roles and the Bible: Creation, the Fall, and Redemption.* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Company, 1994), 80.

names the female, not vice versa (2:23).[13]

The male-centeredness of this passage is obvious. Clark agrees with this and says it is "the first indication of the presence of subordination."[14] He goes on to say in reference to Genesis 2, "the woman's role is understood in relationship to the man, which indicates some kind of subordination."[15] The male-centeredness of the Genesis 2 passage provides the first theological support for the complementarian position.

The next theological foundation for male headship found in Genesis 2 is the priority of Adam's creation.[16] He was created before Eve out of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7). Priority in creation within the human race is indicative of headship.[17] The man's priority in creation corresponds to his headship of his wife, to which he is appointed by God.[18] MacArthur says, "Since man was created first, he was given headship over the woman and creation."[19] Man is the "first-born" and hence would have a natural precedence by birth.[20] MacArthur later says, "The principle of male headship is not a custom but an established fact of God's order and

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[13]Cottrell, 83.

[14]Clark, 24.

[15]Ibid, 25

[16]Dorothy Kelly Patterson and Rhonda Harrington Kelly, eds., *The Woman's Study Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 6.

[17]Cottrell, 83.

[18]Foh, 62.

[19]John MacArthur Jr., *Different By Design: Discovering God's Will for Today's Man and Woman* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1994) 19.

[20]Clark, 25.

creation, and it should never be compromised."[21]

The order of creation from Genesis 2 as a theological foundation for headship is backed up further in the New Testament. The New Testament "sees this precedence as being of decisive importance. According to Paul, woman's subordination to man is grounded in man's being created first (1 Timothy 2:12-13; 1 Corinthians 11:8-9)."[22] Women are prohibited from exercising authority over men, "for it was Adam who was created first, and then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:12-13).[23] As is seen in both the Old and New Testaments, the priority of Adam's creation is used as a reason for male headship.

A third reason for male headship in Genesis 2 is that the woman was created from the man.[24] Woman was created from the rib from man's side (Genesis 2:23). Clark says, "the 'rib' indicates that woman is made from man. God creates woman out of man's side to be a helper fit for him."[25] Woman was taken out of man, then presented to man in order to complete him.[26] Kassian declares, "She was to be a suitable helper or counterpart to Adam. Adam and Eve were equal in terms of their standing before God, yet different from the very onset with regard to their purpose and function."[27] Neur suggests the following about the creation of man and woman.

The different ways of creating man and woman are closely related to their different tasks,

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[21]MacArthur, 41.

[22]Clark, 25.

[23]Cottrell, 86.

[24]Ibid, 88.

[25]Clark, 18.

[26]Patterson, 9.

[27]Kassian, 18.

> which they fulfil in creation according to Genesis 2-3. The man is formed from the soil, where cultivation is entrusted to him by God (Genesis 2:15; 3:17), while the woman is created quite differently, out of man's rib, to be his helper. This is her God-given task in life (Genesis 2:18)."[28]

The creation of woman from man supports the complementarian view male headship.

The next theological foundation for male headship in Genesis 2 is closely linked to the previous reason. It is the fact that not only was the woman created from the man, but she was also created for him.[29] 1 Corinthians 11:9 says, "For indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but the woman for the man's sake." *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* says, "The woman is the man's helper. The man was not created to help the woman, but the reverse."[30] God never intended for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). God saw that Adam had a need and created Eve to be a suitable helper for him (Genesis 2:21-22). That the woman was created for the man's sake and not vice versa shows that God intended for their to be a relationship of subordination between the man and the woman and the subordination was not to be reciprocal.[31] Susan Foh summarizes the above three theological foundations for headship well. She states, "Though the woman's being created second and from and for the man does not indicate inferiority, it does indicate a difference in the way they are to function. The woman is created to be a help to her husband; her function is dependent on him."[32]

A fifth argument for male headship in Genesis 2 is that the man gave the woman her name

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[28]Neur, 70.

[29]MacArthur, 42.

[30]Piper, 102.

[31]Cottrell, 93-94.

[32]Foh, 61.

(Genesis 2:23). Kassian agrees with this. She says, "If the woman and man were meant to have identical roles, God would have named the woman, just as He named the man. In giving Adam the responsibility in naming the woman, a hierarchical relationship between Adam and the woman is established from the onset."[33] Raymond Ortlund in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* says "God allowed Adam to define woman, in keeping with Adam's headship. Adam's sovereign act not only arose out of his own sense of headship, it also made his headship clear to Eve."[34] Adam was also given the responsibility to name the animals (Genesis 2:19). This in no way put women on the level of animals because women were also equally created in the image of God.[35] In many instances the very act of a person's giving a name to something or to someone establishes his authority over that person or thing.[36] Kassian notes, "In the Semitic world, the naming of something or someone was a statement of lordship or authority."[37]

Another support for masculine headship is the use of the name "Adam" for the entire human race. It is the man who is called "Man" or "Human" and not the woman. He bears the name which is the designation of the whole race. Stephen Clark states that this too indicates a kind of subordination.[38]

The next indicator of Adam's headship is the investiture of Adam with authority prior to

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[33]Kassian, 19.

[34]Piper, 103.

[35]Piper, 231.

[36]Cottrell, 94.

[37]Kassian, 16.

[38]Clark, 25.

Eve's creation.[39] God put Adam in the Garden of Eden and gave him responsibility before he gave him a wife. After God created the male, He placed man in the garden of Eden "to work and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15). Adam had work to do before the Fall. God gave Adam responsibility and authority from the very beginning.[40]

There is another example that supports the complementarian view in the first three chapters of Genesis. God gave Adam all of the guidelines for life in the Garden of Eden. He was told that he could eat from any tree in the garden except from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17). God gave Adam this directive before Eve was even created, and the Bible does not indicate that God taught the same thing to Eve. Clark says, "God speaks to him and apparently leaves him to pass on his commands to her."[41] Neuer demonstrates his agreement with this.

> Adam received the divine command not to eat from the tree of knowledge, and he is therefore in a special way responsible for upholding it. Eve, however, learned of the divine command only indirectly through Adam, not from God himself.[42]

This is an example of how man is to be responsible for spiritual leadership in his family. God told Adam the guideline, and thus Adam was responsible for giving Eve guidance and conveying to her what God had spoken. It is evident that Eve was taught the guideline with Eve because when the serpent came, Eve was able to communicate to him the rule that God had given to Adam (Genesis 3:2). This is an argument from the silence of Scripture. There is also the possibility that God

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[39]Patterson, 6.

[40]Kassian, 16.

[41]Clark, 26.

[42]Neuer, 74.

taught Eve, which is also an argument from the silence of Scripture.[43]

The next complementarian support for male headship is found in the third chapter of Genesis. When Adam and Eve sinned, God first spoke to Adam about it. As head of the human family, Adam had a greater initial responsibility for spiritual leadership and thus received the greater blame for the sin.[44] The Bible says in Genesis 3, "But the Lord called to the man, 'Where are you?'" This demonstrates once again that Adam is the head and is responsible for the spiritual well being of both himself and his family. Clark states, "God holds the man accountable for the original transgression."[45] As the God appointed head, Adam bore the primary responsibility to lead their partnership in a God glorifying direction.[46] According to Neuer, in both Genesis 2 and 3 Adam is addressed as the one to whom God has entrusted the responsibility of spiritual leadership. His is the responsibility to instruct Eve in the divine commandment and to make sure that he nor she transgresses it.[47] Only after God had first addressed Adam did He then address Eve (Genesis 2:13). Adam was the leader and the spokesman for both Adam and Eve.[48]

All of the above reasons constitute a solid biblical formulation for the complementarian position of masculine headship. All of these are from the Old Testament, and more specifically from the book of Genesis. These points are backed up further in the New Testament. Due to the

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[43]Cottrell, 117-118.

[44]Cottrell, 125.

[45]Clark, 26.

[46]Cottrell, 125.

[47]Neuer, 74.

[48]Patterson, 6.

nature and brevity of this paper, they will not be discussed. It suffices to say that both the Old Testament and the New Testament teach male and female equality, male headship, and female subordination.

THE EGALITARIAN POSITION

The Egalitarian position focuses on the equality of men and women while minimizing the distinctions. Egalitarians do not agree with the complementarian position that it is possible for women to be equal and subordinate. Egalitarians Scanzoni and Hardesty in their monumental book *All We're Meant to Be* state, "Equality and subordination are contradictions."[49] This is a common egalitarian view. Egalitarians do not believe it is possible to be equal in personhood and subordinate in function. Scanzoni and Hardesty say, "this is just playing word games and is a contradiction of terms."[50] For this reason, egalitarians minimize distinctions in an attempt to disprove the complementarian view of subordination. Egalitarianism is characterized in the following way.

> True egalitarianism must be characterized by what sociologists call "role-interchangeability." Both spouses can fulfill the roles of breadwinner, housekeeper, encourager, career-achiever, child-trainer, and so on. Specialization according to sex disappears.[51]

This focus on equality and minimization of distinctions is typical of egalitarian thought.

Like complementarians, egalitarians affirm that men and women are created equally in the image of God. Gilbert Bilezikian, a prominent egalitarian says, "Both man and woman are God's

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[49]Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation*. (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1975), 110.

[50]Scanzoni, 110.

[51]Scanzoni, 110.

image-bearers. There is no basis in Genesis 1 for confining the image of God to males alone."[52] Paul Jewett in *Man as Male and Female* agrees with this but states, "Man is like God as Man-in-fellowship, that is as male and female."[53] In reference to the first creation narrative, Jewett declares that Genesis 1 "contains no hint of such a hierarchical view" of man and woman.[54] Virginia Mollenkott says at this point, "there is no hint of dominance or submission in the relationship of Adam and Eve."[55]

While most egalitarians and complementarians agree on the equality of man and woman that is taught in the first creation narrative, they disagree greatly on the meaning of the second creation narrative. One place of contention is found in Genesis 2:18 when it says God created Eve to be 'a help meet for him' (KJV). According to Scanzoni and Hardesty, "From this King James rendering stem many of the warped ideas that surround the woman's role. Subsequent translations have corrupted the phrase into 'helpmate' which has engendered visions of an assistant, if not a servant."[56] The key Hebrew words in this passage are *ezer*, 'help,' and *neged*, 'meet.' Scanzoni and Hardest suggest that "'Suitable,' 'corresponding to' or 'adequate' to meet all man's needs for physical, intellectual, and social communion might be better translations for

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[52]Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1985), 22.

[53]Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 29.

[54]Jewett, 50.

[55]Virginia R. Mollenkott, *Women, Men, and the Bible.* (New York, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), 110.

[56]Scanzoni, 26.

the old English 'meet.'[57] Bilezikian agrees with their translation and adds the following:

> Fortunately, the study of the use of the word helper in the Old Testament has dispelled such misconceptions. It is now a matter of general knowledge that this Hebrew word for 'helper' is not used in the Bible with reference to a subordinate person such as a servant or an underling. It is generally attributed to God when He is engaged in activities of relief or rescue among His people. Consequently, the word helper may not be used to draw inferences about subordinate female roles. If anything, the word points to the inadequacy and the helplessness of man when he was bereft of the woman in Eden.[58]

In this argument the egalitarians correctly show that the word '*ezer*' or help is often attributed to God. This is one of the best arguments for the egalitarian position.

Another place of disagreement among complementarians and egalitarians is the implications of the order of creation. Egalitarians do not believe that the chronological primacy of Adam (the fact that he was formed before Eve) is a warrant for male headship. Bilezikian states that such a theory is neither stated nor implied in the text.[59] Mollenkott claims that "unless we are willing to place the literal details of Genesis 2 in conflict with the generalization of Genesis 1, we cannot go along with Paul's reasoning process that women must keep silent because of the order of creation."[60] Mollenkott does not believe that Adam's priority in creation has anything to do with how men and women are supposed to relate. Likewise, Bilezikian continues to disagree with the subordination of woman due to Adam's primacy.

> As soon as primal origination becomes a norm that confers dominance to the first line, both Adam and Eve fall under the rulership of animals. According to Genesis 1, animals were created before humans. Therefore, they should rule over humans. The absurdity of

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[57]Scanzoni, 26.

[58]Bilezikian, 28.

[59]Bilezikain, 30.

[60]Mollenkott, 83.

such a theory is evident. Temporal primacy of itself does not confer superior rank.[61] Bilezikian sees no validity to the complementarian argument that the priority of Adam's creation implies headship, even though it is supported in the New Testament. Bilezikian never addresses this fact but states, "the creation text attaches no hierarchal significance to the fact that the man was created before the woman."[62]

The next place of disagreement between egalitarians and complementarians is related to Eve being created from the rib of Adam. Egalitarians disagree once again with the complementarian view that Eve being made from Adam is a reason for them to have a hierarchal relationship. Paul Jewett is an example of one egalitarian who disagrees with the complementarian view.

> We can only conclude, therefore, that when the narrative in Genesis 2 speaks of the woman as made from the man, the intent is to distinguish her from the animals by implying her essential likeness to the one from whom she is taken. Her superiority over the animals, not her inferiority to the man, is the fundamental thought in the immediate context...So far as Genesis 2 is concerned, sexual hierarchy must be read into the text; it is not required by the text.[63]

Likewise, Scanzoni and Hardesty do not believe that subordination is required by the Genesis 2 creation text. "The creation narrative does say that woman was made from the man and for the man, but the theological leap from this to woman's subordination is a traditional rabbinic understanding that is not supported by the text. After all man was made from dust but this does not make him subordinate to the earth."[64] Mollenkott declares the following in reference to the

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[61]Bilezikian, 30.

[62]Bilezikian, 31.

[63]Jewett, 126.

[64]Scanzoni, 28.

apostle Paul.

> When he reads Genesis 2, he thinks that the story of Adam's rib indicates that Eve is created subordinate to Adam, because that is what tradition teaches about Genesis 2. But there is nothing in the text of Genesis 2 which implies subordination, and even tradition admits that women and men are interdependent, both dependent upon the divine spirit.[65]

As can be seen, egalitarians unanimously agree that the creation narrative in Genesis 2 shows no support for a hierarchal relationship between men and women.

The next basis that egalitarians use for their theological foundation comes from the fall. Mollenkott makes the statement, "there is no hint of dominance and submission in the relationship of Adam and Eve before the fall into sin."[66] Egalitarians do not believe that subordination of the woman to the man existed before the fall. Instead, they believe that it was brought about because of the fall. Bilezikian claims that the woman is not reproved for having assumed leadership in the garden.[67] For this reason, he believes that Eve taking a leadership position was a normal thing. Mollenkott says that Genesis 3:14-19 pronounces a curse on the serpent and a curse on the ground because of sin. She does not believe that God places curse on Adam and Eve.

> God does not curse Adam and Eve, but he does describe to them the unpleasant changes that have been brought about because of their alienation from the Ground of their own Being (God). For one thing, childbearing will become painful. For another, work will become burdensome; people will have to sweat and will feel frustrated by nature's unfriendly thorns and thistles. For another, life will move towards death, toward a return to the accursed ground. And for another, men will exert dominance over their wives. These are not prescriptions. They are simply descriptions of the quality of human life in a fallen world.[68]

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[65]Mollenkott, 81.

[66]Mollenkott, 110.

[67]Bilezekian, 54.

[68]Mollenkott, 111.

Mollenkott believes that subordination is dominance and is a result of the fall. She views it as a negative thing and thinks that it is bad that "there has been no concerted effort to overcome the tendency of males to dominate females."[69] She also believes that the problem lies in interpreting Genesis 3:16 as God's ideal:

> Part of the problem lies in assuming Genesis 3:16 prescribes God's ideal for the human race rather than simply describing the sinful results of the fall of humanity. To be consistent, however, anybody who advocates wifely submission and male domination on that basis should also refuse to use pain-alleviating drugs and techniques, should get rid of all labor saving devices, and should earn food by sweating in the fields without any power tools.[70]

As can be seen, egalitarians find no support for subordination and headship prior to the fall. For this reason, they believe that headship and subordination entered the world due to the fall. In their view, because headship and subordination entered the world do to the fall, they do not believe it is a part of God's original plan. Therefore, according to egalitarians, efforts must be made to reverse headship (which they call male domination) and subordination.

All of the above reasons form the foundation for the egalitarian argument against the complementarian view of male headship. All of the reasons discussed were from the Old Testament, and more specifically from the first three chapters in Genesis. Like the complementarians, egalitarians also find support for their position in the New Testament. Once again, due to the nature and brevity of this paper they will not be discussed.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper wishes to affirm that what position one takes on these views will

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[69]Mollenkott, 111.

[70]Mollenkott, 112-113.

affect much about one's view of marriage and one's view of the woman's role in the church. Thus, this issue deserves considerable attention. Both complementarians and egalitarians hold to the equality of men and women. However, complementarians hold that men and women were divinely created differently, and these differences have implications in both marriage and the church. The implications are male headship/female submission. According to complementarians, the headship of the male is to be a form of Christlike loving leadership in both the home and the church, not the male domination that egalitarians claim the complementarians support. Egalitarians associate all headship with male domination. They do not believe that there can be equality between the sexes if the male is the primary authority. Egalitarians believe that the roles of men and women in both the home and church should be totally interchangeable. Both complementarians and egalitarians claim support for their position from the first three chapters in Genesis.

This author believes that the complementarian position has a stronger theological support. The complementarian argument appears to more thorough and more in line with the whole of Scripture. This author agrees with the complementarian arguments for male headship found in the first three chapters of Genesis. In several instances, this author believes that the egalitarians failed to validly support their arguments. This author believes that the egalitarians arguments are based on an inaccurate interpretation of Scripture, especially in regards to the Fall. The egalitarian position also inaccurately interprets the complementarian arguments and beliefs and also frequently misrepresents them. For these reason, this author supports the complementarian position. Men and women are created equal, yet they do possess God given differences in the way they are to function and relate to one another.

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(1180 pages read for research.)

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