

## NOTE ON THE THEOLOGICAL SENTENCES

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The *THEOLOGICAL SENTENCES* are my presentation of a Christian Theology (approximately 500 pages of 12 pt. text).

The concept follows from Peter Lombard (1095-1160) whose *Sentences* were widely used as an introduction to theological method and as a statement of Christian Theology.

My work begins with the question, "What should be the first sentence of a Christian Theology?" I answer that question by beginning with theological method.

Various starting points have been used by systematicians. Many begin with the doctrine of Revelation as primal to all things claimed by Christians. Others begin with the doctrine of God on grounds that the instinct to believe in the existence of God inheres in the core of consciousness and rationality. Still others believe the starting point should be the Church as the repository of the Christian documents and as the communicator of Christian beliefs. Last, some hold that one of the confessions which is central to the message of salvation is the best starting point, such as the Person of Christ, the work of Christ, or Salvation. Two theologians whose writings exhibit carefully devised structure are Charles Hodge and A. H. Strong. Both have been influential in large segments of American evangelical life.

Systematic theologies generally fall into one or other of the above categories, but there are theologians who do not write within the framework of a stated theological structure; rather, they write topically, but underneath one may discern the outlines of a consistent frame of reference. A splendid example is the work of the British theologian P. T. Forsyth.

I begin with a chapter on method because of the past almost one hundred years of challenges to the nature and transmission of truth. As a generalization, the focus of this challenge is seen in the Logical Positivist school which formulated originally by members of the Vienna Circle in the 1930s, followed by the fracturing of that movement into a number of other perspectives, notably Linguistic Analysis as expressed chiefly in the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein. There emerged a consensus that all statements about the world or of human experience which cannot be empirically verified are literally nonsense (formal logic was an exception). This included metaphysical, religious, and ethical statements. It appeared that Naturalism had triumphed, and reinforced the psychological conclusions of Behaviourism, and its naturalistic Value Theory ally which defined value as "any object of any interest." Opponents of these trends fought back on logical, metaphysical and ethics theory grounds, as well as on the front of the relation between mind and brain, arguing that thought cannot be reduced merely to the physical functions of impulses in the cerebral cortex. Karl Popper was in the forefront of these controversies, especially as to what science is, and what science can and cannot do.

My focus in Methods chapter is on the nature of truth as pursued by both scientists and

theologians, the relation of truth to language and truth claims as to the meaning or interpretation of historical events. If nothing else, Christianity claims to be an historical religion based upon an historical revelation the truths of which are transmitted from generation to generation by means of language.

I apply this truth claim in the next chapter to the Christian revelational claim and to ask in what sense is the Bible claimed to be the revelation from God and about God? Exposition of this follows in chapters on the knowledge and nature of God, the Incarnation, the nature and working of the Holy Spirit, culminating in the chapter on the Trinity. This sequence is the way I see the Christian revelation having unfolded historically.

Thereafter, follow chapters on God's work of Creation, including humanity, the Fall, and sin; then the work of Christ as Redeemer; then the application of his atoning death to the human condition and the meaning of salvation; then the outgrowth of that commitment of faith in Christ to the formation of the Church; and, finally, the last chapter focuses on the Christian hope, death, the resurrection, and the ultimate fulfillment of God's promised kingdom.

Thus, my development is fundamentally in two parts: First, a review of the logic of the Christian truth claim as to the knowledge of God followed by exposition of the nature of God as triune. Then, development of themes which reflect the works of God in creating the world, its corruption by sin and evil, the death of Christ to redeem humanity and the world, looking toward the actual arrival of God's kingdom in and by Jesus Christ.

I believe that fair and balanced scholarship unfolds this from the canonical Scriptures, and that confirmation of our grasp of what the Scriptures teach is embedded in the writings of many of the early church fathers and the early creedal confessions of the churches. The shift of scholarly study of the Church Fathers from the Seminaries to secular departments of religion in America is to be mourned. Nevertheless, I agree that scholarship in those departments or religion has greatly augmented our knowledge of the early centuries of the church's life and thought. My concern is that such study should never have diminished from being major requirements of theological education curricula. I refer especially to Protestant seminaries, including Evangelical ones.

#### **NOTE ON THIS FIRST DRAFT OF THE THEOLOGICAL SENTENCES**

These first draft chapters do not include bibliographical references, extensive notes, or other referential materials. These first draft chapters will be followed by reworked chapters including referential materials and notes, as I have time and energy to complete the revisions.

Why do this work in this way? My own personal bibliography of published writings, which is on this website, indicates the range of my interests. Money in publishing is not the factor, nor is acquiring attention in the publishing world the goal. I wish to make available the work I have done, and am doing, with the hope that it may be helpful to students and interested readers anywhere. My wife Jessie and I make these studies

available to you with our compliments if you have any interest to read any part of them. Hopefully to learn from them; and, more important, to enhance and correct your own thinking in light of errors or misjudgments or shortcomings you perceive to inhere in my work. Knowledge can grow only as we stand on the shoulders of others and reach beyond them. Knowledge acquired as a percentage grade of a professor's work marks the death of growth in knowledge. We who are teachers must teach more than we know.

### **NOTE ON THE THEOLOGICAL SENTENCES BIBLIOGRAPHY**

It has been my custom over many years to give each student an extended bibliography of theological resources, the order of which mimics the sequence of theological topics I have described above. I furnish this as an impetus to encourage life-long study of theology.

Each summer I revised the bibliography in order to take account of some of the large numbers of emerging theological resources now available, thereby necessitating the removal of certain items in order to keep the total length of the bibliography within reasonable limits.

As you peruse the bibliography, notice that the major divisions follow the chapter divisions of the *Theological Sentences*, along with appropriate sub-divisions and headings. The arrangement of the list is not alphabetical but roughly chronological. This enables me to verbally outline to students the emergence of literature as the centuries unfold and the generations come, make their own contribution, then pass away.

As I move from chapter to chapter in my lectures, I first reviewed and annotated to students who the authors are and which books appear to be best to study or acquire on the themes of that particular chapter. As technology overtakes us all, it is now far easier for students to acquire masses of theological literature, data and language tools on CDROMs and DVDs. I envy the opportunities open to beginning students today.

# THEOLOGICAL SENTENCES

Christianity as an Hermeneutic

Samuel J. Mikolaski

"Real thinking is hard -- not only laborious  
but more often than not unsuccessful."  
"...only fragmentary knowledge and partial understanding  
are available to us..."

Bryan Magee

"Now we see in a glass enigmatically ...  
Now I know imperfectly..."

St. Paul

*1 Corinthians 13:12*

## OUTLINE

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# THEOLOGICAL METHOD

A study in Christian critical realism

Samuel J. Mikolaski

## OUTLINE

- 1.0.0 **Fundamental Paradigm**
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- 1.2.0 **Three Major Paradigm Options**
- 1.3.0 **The Idealist Paradigm**
- 1.4.0 **The Materialist Paradigm**
- 1.5.0 **The Creation Paradigm**
- 1.6.0 **Postscript**

### 1.0.0 - Fundamental Paradigm

- 1.0.1           The pursuit of personal identity in our time reflects deep concern about human nature and the future of humanity. Christianity is a trumpet call to arms for the defense of humanity against all forms of reductionism, whether materialist or idealist.
- 1.0.2           Some Christians wrongly think that to glorify God one must denigrate human nature. The Bible deplores sinful human vanity. It does not denigrate human nature, which is created in the divine image (*Psalm 8:4-5*).
- 1.0.3           In Christian faith, human beings, because they are persons, have an ultimate value. This is the fundamental inference to be drawn from the creation-personhood biblical model. The ultimate nature of reality is that of persons and personal relations. Human beings are more than causally determined creatures. They are more than ephemeral, transient reflections of a transcendental or supra-personal order of reality into which they may be absorbed. Nor are they themselves the definition and expression of divinity as some forms of New Age mythology say. Human beings are created in the image of God but they are not what God is. Human beings are permanent, personal spiritual realities. They are creative spirits.
- 1.0.4           Christianity does not opt out of the scientific debate. Nor does Christianity concede the debate to either Naturalism or to the various Idealist schools. Christian insistence upon permanent personal identity includes corollaries which are critically important in the battle against modern forms of reductionism.
- 1.0.5           Christians affirm the reality of moral freedom along with social freedom and responsibility. Christians seek to justify philosophically the true meaning of altruism as acts of self-giving and sacrificial love. Christians believe that biological and social engineering techniques, therapy and social services should enhance human spirituality, which means goals of enhancing freedom and responsibility and the ideals of an open society.
- 1.0.6           This is in stark contrast to assumptions about human nature which diminish or deny the reality of freedom, which promote behavior modification techniques appropriate to a theory of human nature (biologically and psychologically this is totally stimulus-response and non-spiritual), which see altruism as purely egoist need-satisfaction by the organism, and which advocate therapy and social services which are fundamentally coercive, manipulative or which foster dependency and tend toward a closed rather than an open society.

### 1.1.0 - Paradigm Dogmatism and Paradigm Shift

- 1.1.1 Christianity is an hermeneutic. It is a way of arranging the world. An hermeneutic is made up of paradigms, or categories, which handle evidence in certain ways. A paradigm is a settled expectation. Paradigms are the ways in which the data of experience are organized and understood.
- 1.1.2 Paradigms are a form of dogma which appear to be necessary to knowledge. There can be no new discovery without a prior theory or dogmatic frame of reference. There is no such thing as unprejudiced observation. Learning in the sense of acquiring new knowledge entails the questioning of settled expectations by a process of checking in which data are handled in fresh ways. New knowledge depends upon the interplay between categories and evidence, of seeking to eliminate error by means of the significance of data not so previously construed. The quest for truth should be that our categories state the nature of reality, or approximate it, as closely to that which is the case as possible.
- 1.1.3 Examples: Paradigms which the Bible challenges include Polytheism as a way of understanding the nature and relation of divinity to the world, and Materialism as a way of understanding the essential nature of reality.
- 1.1.4 As in the history of science, biblical history is replete with examples of paradigm shifts. This is part of the claim to and process of historical revelation. Has God disclosed himself more fully at various times and in various places to men and women whose ideas about God, their world and themselves had to change? For example, Jacob was surprised to discover that God was present in a wilderness setting, not restricted to his father's house (*Genesis* 28:16). Do such changes of understanding comprise a paradigm - the creation-personhood model - which today more adequately grasps the nature of reality and more adequately arranges the world than competing ideologies? Central to this paradigm is the understanding that God is personal and that he has created us as persons to share his fellowship and work. And, as well, that sin, responsibility, fall, grace and redemption, as critical elements of the paradigm, state the truth of the human condition.
- 1.1.5 As an hermeneutic, Christian belief must be subject to scrutiny just like other paradigms. Christians must constantly test their structural invariants, informing them by yet fresh scientific understanding of the world and fresh understanding of the data of God's revelation.
- 1.1.6 The concept of hermeneutic and paradigm shift is evident in the reception accorded to Paul by the Lycaonians when they called him Hermes (*Acts* 14:12), the god of the alphabet and the transmission of meaning by means of language and through musical sounds. "Chief speaker" here means that Paul gave them the spoken word. Like Hermes, they thought, Paul had "come in," suddenly, unobtrusively, to "blow their minds away" with a completely new understanding of life. This goes beyond semiotics (the theory of language symbols which facilitate the transmission of meaning) to the interpretation conveyed by language as a new pattern of understanding. This could mean interpreter-translator, interpreter-renderer, interpreter-decipherer or interpreter-expounder. Paul is called Hermes because they deem him to be giving a god-like word: he expounds a new understanding of who God is and how through Christ's Gospel human beings may truly know God.

### 1.2.0 - Three Major Paradigm Options

- 1.2.1 Three paradigms dominate the intellectual heritage of the West. These are Idealism, Materialism and Creationism.
- 1.2.2 Systems of Idealism often diverge from one another metaphysically. They struggle with the conjunction of the eternal and the temporal. Despite their diversity most Idealistic systems view ultimate reality as fundamentally non-material. Individual concepts and the structure of such systems have often been used by Christians as vehicles to express Christian ideas. Because truth, goodness and beauty are held to be absolute values and absolute Being is understood to be non-material, even divinity itself, some have viewed certain Idealistic systems as secular versions of Christian teaching. While at the highest level these are understood to be non-personal abstractions, it is their stability as values and the ways in which they are metaphysically structured which makes Idealistic systems attractive to many Christians. Nevertheless, such intellectual liaisons have usually proven to be misalliances ideologically, despite apparent congruences at certain points.
- 1.2.3 Materialism has been more tightly reasoned and inwardly consistent than the Idealist systems. The only major change since the days of its inception among the Greeks has been the modern shift in terminology from the ancient billiard-ball understanding of all reality as consisting of discrete, concrete atoms to a dynamic view of matter, with an added biological component. Modern materialists see this as a shift in vocabulary not ideology. In North America during the past half-century many philosophers prefer to use the term Naturalism rather than the traditional European term Materialism in order to accommodate a more dynamic view of the nature of matter.
- 1.2.4 Creation is the paradigm of the Judeo-Christian tradition and, subsequently, of significant parts of Islamic teaching. Creation focuses upon personhood: that God is personal, that he has personally created the world *ex nihilo* having his own purposes in view, and that the world unfolds according to his purposes uni-directionally.
- 1.2.5 Systems of Idealism and Materialism are fundamentally incompatible; nevertheless, they cohere in their rejection of freedom, though for different reasons. They are both deterministic, in contrast to the Creationist view.
- 1.2.6 Materialism can furnish no options. Events are driven causally. Contingency is an illusion.
- 1.2.7 On the other hand, Idealism cannot handle the contingent future and usually sees reality as perfectly pre-set in the mind of God, past, present and future.
- 1.2.8 Ultimately, for both Idealism and Materialism freedom is an illusion. The nature of evil is a corollary of this issue. Can there be a problem of evil for Materialism if whatever is is, and there exist no absolute values, or values judgments to distinguish between good and evil? Some Idealistic systems cure evil by thought: in the perfection of the divine mind everything coheres. Evil is an illusion. Or else, God is finite and he himself must struggle within the unfolding process against an inherent negative element in the cosmos which finally may or may not be overcome.
- 1.2.9 In the Creationist perspective God's purposes are inconsistent with metaphysical determinism. God had a choice in creation. The world did not have to be the way it is. He could have created a different sort of universe. Not only did God have a choice, he gave choice to persons he created in his own image. They could choose to sin. A scientifically dependable world and contingency entailing freedom are both real. They are the way things really are.

### 1.3.0 - The Idealist Paradigm

1.3.1 Idealism is a proposition about the true nature of reality: that ultimate reality is of the nature of mind; that the universe is a rational, coherent whole shown self-evidently by the presence in it of intelligence, purpose, final causes.

1.3.2 The complexity of the problems inherent in considering what is permanent and what changes, being and becoming, what is reality and what is merely appearance, how good may be defined, and the nature of evil, have evoked many differing Idealist approaches.

Historically, in Idealist systems three instincts shape directions of thought:

1.3.3 First, that perfection resides in Being, in the absolute, in a universal Spirit as the permanent and unchanging substratum of all existing things.

1.3.4 Second, that the physical world including discrete existence is a pale reflection of pure Being. Perceptual limitation to the appearances of things within finite existence may be transcended by elevation of the mind. This inherently denigrates the physical world.

1.3.5 Third, efforts both ancient and modern to overcome the disjunction between the noumenal and phenomenal worlds have been made by allowing to the changeless abstractions a teleological function within nature as part of a coherent cosmic process or coming-to-be of the divine Mind.

1.3.6 Some forms of Idealism are absolute. Xenophanes and Parmenides said that absolute being is motionless. Some are transcendental. The physical world is Maya - illusion - which must be transcended. Other forms of Idealism are conjunctive. The ancient Gnostics postulated dialectical interaction (*szyzygy*) between the transcendental abstractions on a descending scale until at last, near the bottom of the reality scale, the universe is produced. Modern forms of Idealism embrace process. The eternal ideas which comprise the conceptual side of the cosmic process function like magnets to draw the physical elements of nature organically into coherent patterns, including life.

Historical notes on Idealist diversity follow:

1.3.7 **Anaxagoras** (500-423 B.C.E.) said that there is Mind in nature, for which Aristotle called him a sane man in contrast to the haphazard statements of his predecessors (*Metaphysics* 934b16). *Nous* (Mind, Soul-stuff or imperishable Reason) pervades the universe, is the principle of life and change, and furnishes its order and purposiveness. Deterministic atomism is inadequate as an explanation of its harmony. He postulated an infinity of simple substances, each of which has in it the whole.

1.3.8 **Plato** (427-347 B.C.E.) combined the concepts of Mind and Being into his famous Theory of Ideas: the material world is a seeming, a copy of the ideal world which can be apprehended by rational reflection. The Myth of the Cave, the Parable of the Divided Line and the Myth of the Charioteer embody his view that the senses mislead us. We are like prisoners chained in a cave so that we can view shadows but not the reality of which the shadows are but a poor copy. Only by an elevation of the soul in ecstatic, reflective vision can we transcend the world of change to view the Good. The eternal Ideas can be embodied in matter only imperfectly. We need deliverance from the limitations of space and time. We can then behold (*theoria*) the Good. Imperfection is a necessary corollary of embodiment. The universe is not an organic whole expressing the divine mind.

1.3.9 **Aristotle** (384-322 B.C.E) sought to transform Plato's Idealism into a theory which could explain the phenomenal world without denigrating it. He did this by

embedding the conceptual aspect of reality in nature. The world is a process of development from potentiality to actuality. He does not define ultimate reality as Being, transcendently conceived; rather, that the factual world expresses the essences of things. Each entity (*to ti en einai*) is a conceptually determined individual thing. True reality is not other-worldly. The divine, rational principle of the world is the flowering of all sorts of potential life forms hidden within matter. Potentiality is to matter as actuality is to form. This fulfills the function of the final cause (the ideal toward which the entity develops) as the crowning glory of the universe, not cause in merely the sense of an antecedent efficiency principle. Aristotle's concept of matter, form and a rational, divine dynamic is the intellectual foundation of modern Process Philosophy and Theology. He sought to conserve the phenomena by making the divine principle inherent in nature.

- 1.3.10 Beginning with Zeno (c.340-265 B.C.E.) the **Stoics** forged an uneasy alliance between matter and mind. They formulated a system which is arguably metaphysically dualistic. It combines a materialistic view of reality with a conception of the Logos as an immanent principle of rationality. All matter is infused by a World Soul or World Reason. By itself matter and material causes fail to account adequately for the apparent presence of reason as the universal ordering principle of the world. They define the function of this rational principle in deterministic fashion both cosmically and ethically. They enjoin upon humanity the pursuit of imperturbability (*ataraxia*) through desirelessness (*apatheia*). This apparent choice, at least for the chosen few, entailed recognition that humanity's highest duty is life according to nature, which means life in harmony with destiny. Cleanthes eulogized justice (*dike*), i.e., natural law. The wise person accepts whatever fate brings, he said eloquently in the *Hymn to Zeus*. Stoicism's eclecticism made it an attractive alternative for those who held stark materialism to be inadequate and who wished to include universal reason as an inherent principle which gives meaning to life as part of the cosmic order. Later, Marcus Aurelius (121-180 C.E.) expressed this view as a way of life in the twelve books of his *Meditations*.
- 1.3.11 Disparagement of the physical world was a hallmark of Idealist systems during the period of the early intellectual development of the Christian faith. Various forms of **Gnosticism** were prominent. The second century writings of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus are polemical Christian responses to quasi-religious elements of Gnostic theory.
- 1.3.12 Gnostic transcendentalism was illuminationist. It denigrated the physical world and sense perception and elevated mystical rationalism as the vehicle to truth. Facilitated by a guru teacher one might hope to escape earthbound absorption (the somatic state), go beyond a moralist frame of reference (the psychical state) to higher spiritual understanding (the pneumatic state). Salvation is achieved by spiritual illumination which the common masses cannot achieve. Justin's stress upon Jesus as the Teacher (the *Logos Spermatikos*) as the one who could lead mankind to God was aimed to counter Gnostic teaching. Later, theories of scripture interpretation such as aspects of Origen's interpretive method in principle fostered a parallel view: Literal interpretation is merely somatic. Moral teaching is psychical. The ideal content of scripture can be grasped only pneumatically as illumination by self-evident truth. Esoteric knowledge triumphs over simplistic, literalist, historically based faith.
- 1.3.13 Allegory can yield remarkable results in religious explanation. Somehow, no matter how diverse the text content may be, the previously assumed thesis is confirmed. In Gnostic interpretation that thesis is that God lies within us, ecstatic revelation is the path to meta-rational knowledge, and that the goal is self-knowledge by means of elevation of the mind to direct contact with divinity. We ourselves are the divine. This is fundamentally not a pursuit of virtue, nor is it erasure of individuality (though ecstasy may suggest that to some), nor is it simply probing self-analysis. It is recognition that we, individually, are God. We become creators of the divine. All interpretation ends with this focus. Adam and Eve, in one version, do not represent the first humans. They represent spiritual forces which struggle inside us. Eve becomes an awakening within Adam to

become aware of his own divinity against the wishes of the Creator who out of envy sought to deny humans knowledge of spiritual selfhood. Jesus becomes an agent to frustrate the Creator-God's envy by giving to humanity the fruit of true knowledge. Godlikeness is aspiration to divinity. It is the quest to discover the divinity inside us. The search is the act of godliness, the journey which brings about realization that "the Spirit of the universe is us."

- 1.3.14                   Mistrust of the senses and disparagement of the physical world led to fantastic theories about transcendental reality and about how such a miserable existence as ours in an evil-infected world could come about in view of the perfection of the transcendental realities. In Irenaeus we have one of the most complete extant analyses of Gnostic mythology, namely, that of **Valentinus** (fl. 120-160 C.E.) While Irenaeus was Valentinus' inveterate enemy, his analysis is informative:
- 1.3.15                   Ultimate reality (the Pleroma, i.e., Fullness) transcends earthly existence. This sorry world is a mistake. It came about through a lapse in Wisdom.
- 1.3.16                   The Pleroma is made up of thirty elements in three downwardly cascading metaphysical groups: The Ogdoad (8), headed by the Tetrad of 4, which are the root of all things; the Decad (10); and the Dodecad (12). Arranged in pairs, these elements produce the downwardly cascading emanations (*eons*) by means of *syzygy*, which appears to be a sort of intellectual conjugal, reproductive process or causitive emanation. Divinity is essentially comprised of erotic pairs. They may be intellectually coherent, or they may be viewed as antitheses which synthesize to form new realities in the manner proposed by Empedocles or Hegel. It is hard to know to what extent these are metaphysical realities, or whether they must be deconstructed into functions of the human psyche and pathology.
- 1.3.17                   At the top of the hierarchy the male principle *Bythos* (Profundity, Depth) and the female principle *Sige* (Silence) produce *Nous* (Intelligence) and *Aletheia* (Truth). From these four proceed *Logos* (Word) and *Zoe* (Life), *Anthropos* (Humanity) and *Ecclesia* (Community or, for Christian Gnostics, Church). From these are produced elements of the Decad including Deep Mixing, Union, Self-existence, Begetting, Happiness, and others. The Dodecad comprises elements such as Faith, Hope, Love, Wisdom, Felicity, to mention a few.
- 1.3.18                   Beneath the Pleroma of 30 is produced the female principle *Sophia*, a lower form of wisdom. Because of a besetting passion in her, there results separation from transcendence and the formation of lower orders, including discrete souls and the world. Wisdom erred. She made a mistake. She produced the Artificer-Creator, the Jewish Creator-God, who in turn created this unfortunate world as a mixture of good and evil. The mission of enlightenment is to free souls of spiritually minded individuals (the pneumatics), in contrast to the hopelessly intellectually degenerate carnal and psychic individuals, by means of generating deep back-to-self feelings, release from earthbound concerns, and fusion with or vision of the sublime. This happens for Christian Gnostics by the Holy Spirit who engenders in seekers a whiff of immortality of which Jesus is said to be the pattern.
- 1.3.19                   Making ideal realities and values which are only imperfectly realized in their earthly state transcendental, and proposing that these can be grasped only by a flash of illumination characterize most religious expressions of idealist philosophy. New Age mythologies are contemporary parallels.
- 1.3.20                   Contemporary New Age teaching is essentially a mystical form of Idealism which has been adapted to the modern secular American hedonist life style. It appeals to the morally and spiritually uprooted, purposeless, educated middle class. It purports to address the pluralism and fragmentation of modern life, offering insight into a mystical

wholeness, new self-understanding and new identity: Don't fight the universal, unfolding Spirit. Go with the flow. Feel yourself to be a part of the whole. Ultimate reality is both male and female. The dynamic of life is erotic in nature, Motherearthish, especially female sexuality. The dualism of good and evil must somehow be absorbed coherently in one universal Spirit. We are part of that Spirit, God. Peripheral interests are often attached to the central monistic thesis, including astrology, the occult, tantric sex (a form of the ancient fertility cult), ecological absorption and nature worship, and reincarnation of the soul. There has been a significant intrusion of New Age doctrine in education and business theory in California in recent years which philosophizes about our capacity to tap into cosmic energy.

- 1.3.21 It is beyond the scope of these notes to explore in detail the many ancient and modern forms of Idealism and the ways in which they have been utilized, in most cases mistakenly I believe, as frames of reference for Christian theology. These include Plotinus, the Manicheans, G. W. Leibniz, Benedict Spinoza, George Berkeley, Immanuel Kant, J. G. Fichte, F. W. J. Schelling, G. W. F. Hegel, T. H. Green, E. S. Brightman, Martin Heidegger, and Paul Tillich (the list does not mention many in middle and late medieval times).
- 1.3.22 Contemporary forms of Gnostic and Neoplatonic theory in Christian guise are those of **Paul Tillich** (1886-1965) and his disciple Gordon D. Kaufmann. The Ground-of-Being is not the God of the Old Testament. The Ground-of-Being is the coming-to-be of divinely-oriented selfhood, capable of self-sacrifice, as in the case of Jesus.
- 1.3.23 Tillich and Kaufmann demythologize and deconstruct traditional understanding of the nature and attributes of God into the dynamics of human existence. God as Father means the Source or Ground of all that is. God becomes limit imposed upon the unlimited potential (even chaos) of the material order. God as Son means revealedness to us; the sense of divine presence with us; or, confirmation of the divinity within us especially in our capacity to love. God as Spirit is awareness of God's immanence, a creative presence which is defined in panpsychistic terms.
- 1.3.24 Polar relationships between realities of existence are central features of Tillich's theology, which focuses on the nature and relation of the self to the world. Like the Gnostics, Tillich divides reality into correlating pairs: first, individualization and participation (self-centredness vs the longing for personal communion); dynamics and form (Aristotle's potentiality and fulfillment under the power of some form or ideal); freedom and destiny (capacity to decide in relation to one's destiny, i.e., one's own chosen end). For Tillich, Being is not God out there. Being is our own inner reality become coherent through overcoming the self-estrangement of our existence by means of hope and creative self-interpretation. This New Being is expressed historically in Jesus as the Christ. Tillich's system depends upon self-understanding, within a rising structure of analysis (in contrast to the downward metaphysical cascade of the Gnostics) which the Christian theological symbols such as Being and God, Existence and Christ, Life and Spirit represent.
- 1.3.25 For Tillich, God is not a being. The being of God is Being-itself. God is not a self related to another self, or to an environment. God transcends every finite being. All terms purporting to describe God are anthropomorphic and cannot be understood literally, except the phrase that "God is being-itself." God is the ground of all existing things without himself being one of them (it should be noted that "ground" is a metaphor in Tillich's sentences).
- 1.3.26 Does this mean anything at all? If, as Tillich argues, God cannot be said to be all-powerful and perfectly good (the crux of the problem of evil's existing) then no state of affairs however evil can falsify his view. Tillich's God is compatible with anything.

- 1.3.27 Except in their Hindu forms, modern systems of Idealism have jettisoned disparagement of the physical world, chiefly because in an age of science the reality and wonders of the physical order simply cannot be ignored. It remains for Christians to re-state the divinely sanctioned value of the created order.
- 1.3.28 **A. N. Whitehead's** (1861-1947) correlation of the idealist paradigm within a scientifically based world view in what is known as Process Philosophy is in our time the most influential example of this trend in the West. The influence of Process Philosophy in the formulation of modern Christian theology known as Process Theology has been enormous.
- 1.3.29 Whitehead attempts to conserve the Ideas and transcendental values (the Eternal Objects) of Plato's Idealism in an Aristotelian format: the factual world expresses eternal realities or the essences of things. The ideal is expressed in the cosmic process. There are necessary structures in a world which is developing by means of evolutionary processes. The divine, creative element is in process of unfolding itself in the infinite variety of life forms and in intelligent creatures. God is both eternal and temporal. The divine is coming-to-be within the on-going process of creation.
- 1.3.30 Whitehead says that reality consists of an organized system of what he calls "actual entities" or "actual occasions" which, he says, are subjects or selves; they are "the final real things of which the world is made up," (*Process and Reality*, 1941, p.27). There are also "eternal objects": which are the ideals, values, or abstract ideas of objects which are realized by the actual entities. He defines an eternal object as "any entity whose conceptual recognition does not involve a necessary reference to any definite actual entities of the temporal world," (p.70). As subjects or selves, actual entities experience data or materials drawn from other actual entities at their demise by means of a process of prehension or feeling (p.35). The prehension of an eternal object he calls a conceptual prehension, which constitutes the mental pole of the actual entity; whereas, the prehension of the concrete data of another actual entity is known as a physical prehension and constitutes the physical pole of the actual entity. As guiding ideals the eternal objects govern the selection and absorption of a datum. Thus guided by certain ideals the actual entity mayprehend a datum positively or negatively (reject it) in accordance with a subjective aim which it has fashioned for itself from its prehension of particular eternal objects. This subjective aim is the ideal which the actual entity has selected for itself from the world of eternal objects, for it is a *causa sui* in this process, and its choice will determine its own nature, development, and character at the point of satisfaction. All actual entities endure for a finite period and at their death they "give out" concrete data for ingression into other actual entities.
- 1.3.31 Whitehead makes an important distinction between the being of God and other actual entities. While it is in their passing away that actual entities provide concrete data for prehension by other actual entities, God abides, he does not pass away. He is the store of values for prehension by other actual entities. This aspect of God's nature in virtue of which he provides data for others is called by Whitehead God's Superject Nature. However, God also has a conceptual and physical pole like other actual entities, which Whitehead calls the primordial and consequent natures of God (p. 521, 523). Viewed as primordial, God is "the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality;" "he is the lure for feeling, the eternal urge of desire," (p. 521, 522). Which is to say that in his primordial nature God provides in himself the order or arrangement of eternal objects as ideal possibilities for prehension by actual entities. God arranges the eternal objects in ideal patterns and he desires that they be received by actual entities to perfect their possibilities; but he does not coerce, he persuades. God's consequent nature is his prehension physically of the concrete data of the evolving universe. This implies that God may be developing continually. Because of creative advance in the universe the consequent nature of God is not complete (p.523-524).

- 1.3.32                    Important general concepts of Whitehead's philosophy are: (1) The concept of teleologically oriented, valuing, free, actual entities. (2) That the eternal objects are objects of value to actual entities. (3) That God conserves and arranges the eternal objects as ideal possibilities in himself for prehension by actual entities. (4) That God acts persuasively, not coercively. This is the religious point which Whitehead makes about Christ: "The life of Christ is not an exhibition of over-ruling power. Its glory is for those who can discern it, and not for the world. Its power lies in its absence of force. It has the decisiveness of a supreme ideal, and that is why the history of the world divides at this point in time (*Religion in the Making*, 1930, p.56-57). Again, the ideal is apprehended in a moment of intellectual illumination.
- 1.3.33                    Concepts and values in systems of Idealism which attract Christians to employ them as frames of reference for Christian theology include:
- 1.3.34                    (a) Their teleological view of the cosmos; that purpose and fulfillment of potential are realities; and that Materialism's view of causation as purely mechanical is an inadequate explanation for creative change in the universe.
- 1.3.35                    (b) Their insistence upon the reality and place of Reason (Mind, Logos) or evidence of rationality in a universe which makes sense. It is a cosmos not a chaos. It did not arrive at its present state by chance collocations of atoms.
- 1.3.36                    (c) Their concession that evidence of the presence of Reason or Mind points to the likelihood of there being a Ground of Being, or Absolute, or God as the foundation and author of all things. The world gives evidence of being an ordered world; of being the product of intelligent design; and that this order is in the nature of things not merely in the ways we perceive them.
- 1.3.37                    (d) Their insistence that despite the flux of experience and the deceptions which sense perception can cause, truth, goodness and beauty are eternal, transcendental realities which can be truly known.
- 1.3.38                    (e) Their thesis that ultimate reality or the Ground of Being transcends space and time and, usually, that it transcends discrete personhood or any concept of God as personal (Paul Tillich's "God beyond God"). Most systems of Idealism look for fusion of discrete minds with, or absorption of discrete minds in, absolute Mind. Individual existence is seen to be a lesser form of existence than final absorption in infinity in some trans-personal sense.
- 1.3.39                    (f) Their view, common to many religious versions of Idealism, that salvation or emancipation entails one's transcending the world of space and time to behold ultimate reality as a whole, beyond disparate existence. Plato's Myth of the Charioteer posits the soul as aspiring to the sublime; however, while one of the horses is well-bred and longs to reach the transcendental realities, the other is poorly bred and is a drag on true beholding of the eternal realities. This is testimony to inherent tensions between higher and lower instincts in human nature.
- 1.3.40                    Nevertheless, axioms of Christian understanding of the nature of reality compel reservation about the use of such systems as frames of reference for the construction of a Christian world view. These include:
- 1.3.41                    **(a) The nature of God as trans-personal.** What is Being? What is the meaning of saying that Being is beyond personhood, or beyond the physical universe? In Christian teaching God is personal not trans-personal. He, as the infinite, eternal Creator personally brought the world into existence with his own purposes in view.

- 1.3.42           **(b) The problem of evil.** The Christian doctrine of creation forces the problem of evil into its sharpest and most uncomfortable modality. It places evil squarely within a moral not merely metaphysical context. The ancient Idealists thought that evil is inherent in the natural order and that matter is inherently resistant to perfect fulfillment of the eternal objects in space and time. In this respect in modern Process Theology God is finite and is himself struggling to achieve his purposes in a world not fully compliant with his purposes. Also, Christians argue that evil may not be re-defined within the Absolute as a good. In most Idealist systems, freedom becomes an illusion because everything is predisposed in the perfection of the mind of God or within the Absolute. Spinoza went to great lengths to deny the reality of freedom within the Idealist frame of reference. Further, the Christian creationist perspective finds inadequate the notion that radical evil is simply an irrational, surd element in the universe, as Immanuel Kant thought. Rather, in Christian teaching God's works are works of perfection and evil is due to the Fall of creatures made by God for freedom. As to its origin, evil is inextricably linked to sin in Christian belief, whatever the subsequent consequences of sin may be in the presence of surd evils in the world.
- 1.3.43           **(c) The cure for evil.** In Christian teaching evil cannot be cured by thought. Salvation calls for more than enlightenment. Evil can be cured only by action and that action is God's work of redemption through Christ's Cross.
- 1.3.44           **Augustine** (354-430 C.E.) clearly saw the paradigmatic difference between the Christian view of God and the world and Idealist formulations.
- 1.3.45           For a long time Augustine's conversion had been hindered by his early Platonic and Manicheist, and later Neoplatonist, idealist conceptions. He had been troubled by problems such as the nature of the Absolute, the materiality of God, the present world as the creation of God, the substantiality of evil, and problems of morality and divine justice.
- 1.3.46           Something other than a doctrine of a chain of being was needed, says Augustine. Neoplatonism sought to preserve the impassibility of the Absolute by positing Mind and Soul to be lower levels of reality which only partly reflect absolute Good. The lower level, Soul, through self-deception and illusions of power, finally produces the world which *in the nature of the case* is imperfect.
- 1.3.47           The certainty of God's purposes is due not to inexorable causal sequence, nor to the ultimate perfection (changelessness, beauty of the whole) of the Neopythagorean or Neoplatonic Absolute; rather, they reflect God's knowledge of his creation and his capacity through grace to deal with the abuse of freedom by creatures he has created. The Cross is God's own acceptance of responsibility for the kind of world he has created and is his judicial dealing with creaturely rebellion. The crux of the matter is freedom: persons, responsibility, judgment, grace, atonement, redemption.
- 1.3.48           Revulsion from the physical world, centered in the bondage of concupiscence, failed to satisfy Augustine. It was too easy to escape responsibility by attributing one's carnal impulses to powers of darkness. Holding evil to be an ineradicable inherent force in the natural order as the Manichees did was too self-serving: the inconsistency of professed shame to be in the body while at the same time justifying its weaknesses and excesses in behavior. It also failed to resonate with the beauty of the world as the handiwork of God. Augustine gradually realized that Manicheism comprised a pseudo-intellectualism which purported to honor the Light-world when in reality it was impotent in face of the Dark-world powers which were in truth human moral failure.
- 1.3.49           For Augustine, conversion involved a paradigmatic shift as well as spiritual conversion to faith in Christ: God is Spirit and is personal. God is directly the author of creation. Evil originates in sin. Salvation is more than illumination, it is redemption

accomplished by God through grace and the Cross. This frame of reference embraces Persons as the ultimate nature of reality; Sin, Wrath and Grace; the Redeemer, Atonement, Election; the People of God and the City of God; History as the fulfillment of God's benign purposes within time that is linear, and the Final State which will comprise redeemed persons in eternal, conscious communion with God in the service of God. Augustine arrived at this paradigm not simply by speculation or rational reflection but by reflecting upon the implications of the divine revelation given through the prophets and in Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God.

#### 1.4.0 - The Materialist Paradigm

- 1.4.1 With the exception of its modern forced revision of the nature of matter away from atoms thought of as uncuttable bits of stuff, Materialism has nevertheless been and continues to be consistently more logically framed and articulated than systems of Idealism, and may be regarded as the dominant intellectual force in the modern world. Recently, however, some physicists have raised questions about its theory of the randomness and purposelessness of life.
- 1.4.2 Ancient Materialism is a proposition about what is real: That matter, viewed in atomistic fashion, along with motion, are the fundamental components of the universe. That only sensibly perceived and empirically verifiable entities and processes exist. That there are no supernatural or trans-world realities such as Mind, or Reason, or God. That everything is causally determined and no other explanation is either valid or needed. That all apparently non-material entities, processes or events are epiphenomena and are caused solely by material factors. That all values are sense-based and merely register pleasure or pain. That death is the end of life and marks physical dissolution of every individual living thing. There is no rational basis for supposing any after-life.
- 1.4.3 Modern versions of Materialism have modified its ancient atomism to take account of the more dynamic characteristics of life biologically and psychologically on the basis of the evolutionary hypothesis. Hence, especially in the United States, the term Naturalism is preferred. Consistent with the original premise of Materialism, American Naturalist philosophers argue that whatever is framed in biological and psychological terms is simply describing functions of matter and energy, as behavioral responses, which Leucippus, Epicurus and the ancient hedonists had said in ancient times.
- 1.4.4 Materialists and Naturalists hold that there is only one level of reality and that the world as we empirically perceive it is the whole of reality. The universe requires no further supernatural, or transnatural, explanation. The universe is self-existent, self-explanatory, self-operating and self-directing. There is no mystery, only puzzles to be solved by science. We err to view the world process in anthropocentric terms, or to claim that it functions teleologically in relation to ends. All values, compulsions, restraints can be, and must be, accounted for without recourse to any God, objective values, or transcendental values. Man's highest good is to pursue natural ends of pleasure and satisfaction under natural conditions, to avoid pain, and to jettison notions of life after death.
- 1.4.5 While Materialism's metaphysic of atoms and the void naturally collide with Christian teaching about the creation of the world by God, its hedonism, determinism and fatalism are the more immediately felt issues, as they were in early Christian times. These are also its attraction to modern hedonists, pessimists and atheists.
- 1.4.6 One of the most eloquent statements of Materialism as a life view is that of **Bertrand Russell** (1872-1969): *That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins -- all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built,* ("A Free Man's Worship," in *Selected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, n.d., p.3)

Historical notes on the Materialist paradigm follow:

- 1.4.7 **Leucippus** (c.500-430 B.C.E.) proposed the brilliant insight, not confirmed scientifically until the mid-nineteenth century C.E., that reality is made up of atoms, all of which are primary and homogeneous, which move in the void. Apart from the illogicality that the void (*to kenon*) exists (what *is* a hole?), the theory has remained virtually unchanged to the present. Reality is the Full (*to pleon*) which comprises Atoms moving in the Void.
- 1.4.8 Atoms (*atomos*) are the smallest part of being. They are uncuttables. Each is equivalent to the others. Their primary quality is to fill space. They are corporeal, indivisible, changeless, homogeneous and continuous through space and time. Each is apparently equivalent to the others (apparently a logical parallel to Parmenides' monism except in number and motion). It follows that no qualitative differences in the world are primary. They all derive from quantitative differences. This is what links ancient and modern materialists within a consistent perspective: change is due to matter in motion. All action, all processes, are by way of contact (causally determined). Reality is a one-way, causal stream.
- 1.4.9 **Democritus** (c.460-360 B.C.E.) adopts atomism and extends its implications in a hedonist philosophical direction. Perception is physically based, deriving from atomic forms or shadows (*eidola*) which are thrown off by bodies and strike our senses (still today held by some materialists). Qualities and qualitative changes are not in the atoms, they are in us. Qualities derive from the ways the motions of atoms affect us. Qualities thus have an objective base but they do not transcend material reality.
- 1.4.10 Democritus said that life consists of soul-stuff, a kind of fire or breath, also comprised of atoms, which are distributed throughout the body. Death is simply the cessation of one grouping of atoms and their redistribution into another collocation of atoms.
- 1.4.11 **Epicurus** (c.341-270 B.C.E.) develops the materialist perspective into a full-fledged philosophy of life. While Stoicism gained wide adherence in the ancient world because it eclectically softened its materialism through inclusion of a rational principle in the cosmos, Epicurean materialistic hedonism became the dominant force in ethical theory. Many of St. Paul's arguments for the Christian life appear to counter the Epicurean philosophy of life. New Testament scholars have paid too little attention to Epicureanism as the primary ethical perspective of the times. Contemporary American hedonism, represented in the Pragmatism of William James and the Instrumentalism of John Dewey, is virtually identical with Epicurean hedonism and comprises the most influential contemporary non-Christian life-view in the United States. Parallels which may be drawn between ancient and modern forms of materialistic hedonism are striking.
- 1.4.12 All of reality -- all Being and Becoming -- are functions of atoms in the void. The total content of the mind is sense perception. The chief end of humans is pleasure, whether positive pleasure or painlessness. The ideal state (*ataraxia*) is repose, tranquillity, freedom from disturbance. One should so order life as to avoid disturbance, but if desire arises satisfy it to get rid of it. Practical wisdom (*phronesis*) is the capacity to correctly discriminate between greater and lesser pleasures.
- 1.4.13 Religion and belief in the gods originate in ignorance and fear, as does belief in purpose and fate. If the gods exist at all they have nothing to do with this world, said Epicurus in his *Letter to Menoecus*. He adds that we should become accustomed to the idea that death is nothing to us. There follows one of the most famous of ancient quips. The pain of death is its expectation. Therefore death, the most terrifying of ills, "is nothing to us, since so long as we exist death is not with us; but when death comes, then

we do not exist." It concerns neither the living nor the dead, "since for the former it is not, and the latter are no more."

- 1.4.14                   Pleasure is the beginning and end of the blessed life. Pleasure is the first good innate in us. By feeling we judge what is good (pleasurable) or bad (disturbing). For Epicurus, this did not lead to luxurious living; rather he advocated simple pleasures by means of judicious calculation of the advantages and disadvantages of any course of action. Paul questions such expedience (calculus of advantage) as the basis for a moral life. For Paul it is a false premise (*kenodoxia*). Epicurus argues that the prudent person chooses those actions which conduce to the most pleasant results. He and she laugh at destiny. The prudent recognize that while some events happen by necessity and some by chance, some are nevertheless within our control. Hence, whatever power remains is within us to control events. With this in view, pursue the pleasant life: freedom from pain in the body and from trouble in the mind. Lucretius (98-54 B.C.E) in *De Rerum Natura* furnishes a widely read exposition of Epicurean philosophy.
- 1.4.15                   Three major trends in post-Medieval times greatly enhanced the credibility of Materialism while at the same time forcing Christian theism and the Idealist traditions into defensive positions. This was a far cry from their dominance in the intellectual marketplace during the Middle Ages. These are:
- 1.4.16                   (a) The development of scientific theory and method from the time of Francis Bacon which focused attention upon marshaling facts, induction and empirical verification rather than syllogistic deduction.
- 1.4.17                   (b) David Hume's skepticism, which appeared to undermine not only theology, but any epistemological certainty. Hume argued that warranted assertion can be based only upon sense perception and that generalizations are made only as matters of habit due to repeated observations.
- 1.4.18                   (c) The Evolution hypothesis, which reformulated Materialism into a dynamic, process theory, paralleled by the later reformulation of the conception of the atom in terms of energy rather than as bits of hard, irreducible stuff.
- 1.4.19                   Modern dynamic Materialism is as causally determinist, is as denying of the existence of any trans-physical reality or transcendental values, and is as fatalistic in outlook as were its ancient counterparts.
- 1.4.20                   **Francis Bacon** (1561-1626) turned attention away from metaphysics and formal logic to observation, to the how rather than to the why of things. He said that we are victims of making ourselves the measure of things (idols of the tribe), of our own ego-centric predicament (idols of the cave), of compounding error by making it the foundation of common discourse (idols of the marketplace), and of accepting received systems uncritically, which become a world-view (idols of the theater). He questioned the doctrine of final causes and, he said, there had been a failure to enquire into the nature of efficient causes.
- 1.4.21                   Bacon is acknowledged to be one of the founders of modern science. No authority can override the results of accurate observation, provided there is a valid process of correction. In the *Novum Organum* he says, "I propose to establish progressive stages of certainty. The evidence of the sense, helped and guarded by a certain process of correction I retain."
- 1.4.22                   Eschew dogmatism. Collect and observe. Summarize into hypotheses. Correct apprehension of data. Revise hypotheses. And so on. These became the hallmarks of science, in contrast to deduction from received premises which dominated Medieval philosophy and theology.

- 1.4.23                    It is puzzling that science as we know it did not develop among the Greeks, among whom Materialism and Logic, as well as the Idealist systems, were born, but that it did develop at the end of Medieval times. Why? Science energized minds of the West because of its universality, A. N. Whitehead says; and that universality was solidly based upon the premise of the creation of the world by God. The world functions under one set of coherent laws, not at the whim of regional, competing gods. Universal generalization became possible, but it was always inherent in the doctrine of creation. What happens here under given conditions will happen there under those same conditions. Detailed occurrence can be correlated with its antecedents in a definite manner, which exemplifies general principles. Natural Law replaced Stoic determinism and fatalism. There can be no science absent "a widespread conviction in the existence of an *Order of Things*, and, in particular, of an *Order of Nature*," says Whitehead (*Science and the Modern World*, 1925, p.4). Science emerged in part "from medieval insistence on the rationality of God." The roots of science go deep into an instinctive faith in the order and rationality of the world. For Bacon, belief in efficient causes and belief in creation went hand in hand. Radical secularization of the scientific instinct came later.
- 1.4.24                    **Thomas Hobbes** (1588-1679) revitalized interest in the atomist thesis. The only real is matter in motion. Humans fundamentally are not rational creatures but are controlled by their passions (feelings, appetites). Pleasure and pain are the forces which move us. Thought is matter in motion (in the modern debate this is to say that mind is simply a function of physical brain). All thoughts originate in sensations, which are faint atom outlines of objects which strike the senses. Qualities exist in us, not in nature. Good is relative to positive inclination or desire; evil is relative to aversion or pain. Humans were drawn into community only because in the state of nature they found selfish independence to be intolerable. It remains to say how such natively selfish creatures can best relate to one another, which Hobbes speculated must be through a totalitarian system for the sake of the self-preservation of all and to secure political and social peace. Soul and mind are meaningless terms. The term "man" is not one thing and "living body" another; rather, they are the same. The term "man" signifies nothing beyond the functioning body. Choices are always determined. Will simply signifies the last passion in a series. The last appetite is the definition of Will. Freedom is an illusion.
- 1.4.25                    Hobbes' Materialism is virtually indistinguishable from contemporary behaviorally oriented American Naturalism.
- 1.4.26                    **John Locke** (1632-1704) turned interest to the affective side of human nature. How does the mind work? Answer: By means of an empirically based psychology. The mind comprises sensory data combined with introspection. Both are sensations, the one being outer, the other being inner. He rejects the notion of innate ideas. Generalizations or what are claimed to be universal ideas do not prove innateness. There are no innate principles in the mind. Generalizations are simply internal, intellectual structures. It is nonsense to suppose that ideas are latent in the mind and that we're not aware of them. Ideas may be simple (from one sense channel) or complex; observation may be passive (the data come to us) or active (we compound and manipulate the discrete bits of data). Physical qualities inhere in objects, but many so called qualities are generated by them in us and some physical objects can change others, such as fire changes the primary qualities of wood.
- 1.4.27                    The concept of physical cause calls for there being a first, divine cause, said Locke. Locke's contribution to the modern development of Materialism, despite his latent theism, lay in his view that human knowledge is psychologically built up from sensory perceptions: "all content of ideas arises from sensation" became axiomatic. As well, he is known for advocating a free church in a free state and that the state should protect every religious belief as personal opinion.

- 1.4.28                **David Hume** (1711-1776) is quintessentially the key philosophical figure of the Age of Reason whose theory of knowledge (*Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*), ironically, may be employed as much against Materialist dogma as against Theism.
- 1.4.29                In answer to the question "What can the mind know?" Hume says that the mind is limited to ideas and impressions and that these are not irreducibly different. Ideas are anything the mind has in it, which are copies of impressions. Impressions are caused by sensations of material objects. There are also impressions caused by pleasure and pain, and by the relations between objects. All ideas derive from some prior impressions, ultimately from simple impressions. Thus all that is known of the world is *a posteriori*, i.e., it follows from experience. Nothing can be known *a priori*, apart from sensory data. We know the impressions; substance we do not know. Knowledge is wholly empirically based. Empiricism is the criterion of truth.
- 1.4.30                As to relations, cause and effect are probably the most important. Only by experience do we infer effects from causes; one cannot *a priori* infer the cause from an effect. Thus if the existence of God is a matter of fact, no *a priori* argument can establish this, either in its ontological or cosmological form. We observe that all things have causes, but how do we know that things we have not experienced must have causes? Further, what makes an ultimate cause ultimate?
- 1.4.31                Conclusions based on experience follow neither *a priori*, as necessary rational inferences; nor do they follow with certainty from factual knowledge, *a posteriori*; rather, they follow from custom or habit. Cause we do not see. We infer cause or infer conclusions from experience which suggests likelihood or probability. The idea of necessity derives from impressions of repeated association. Causality is not an impression of sensation. It becomes a habit of expectation. All we see is a conjunction of events. The concept of cause arises in us. The relation of cause to effect is entirely derived from experience and all further knowledge is based upon the assumption that the future will be conformable to the past. Any attempt at proof is simply going in a circle because the point in question is taken for granted. This is the depth of Hume's skepticism: substance and causality are relations between ideas which cannot be proved. Nevertheless, only a fool would reject the expectation of causal uniformity, he said. We all act upon it: *All arguments from experience are founded on the similarity which we discover among natural objects, and by which we are induced to expect effects similar to those which we have found to follow from such objects,*" (p.37).
- 1.4.32                Hume's skepticism awakened Immanuel Kant to the problem of *a priori* synthesis and has remained an issue as to the certainty of knowledge, especially of the way in which scientific conclusions are framed. Hume's skepticism lies at the heart of modern American relativistic humanism on religious, moral and social issues. Today religious beliefs and moral norms are explained purely naturalistically as uncritically held beliefs based on social customs.
- 1.4.33                It also underlies modern rejection of miracle. Hume proposed rejection on an instinctual base: The only evidence is testimony. On the other hand, we have repeated daily evidence of the inviolableness of nature. Which is the easier choice? For Hume, to be credible the testimony would have to be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it attempts to establish. The credibility of miracle *must* rule out any natural explanation.
- 1.4.34                The alliance in the nineteenth century between traditional Materialism, already being dynamically re-fashioned by behavioral psychology, and a naturalistic understanding of the evolutionary hypothesis provided a scientifically credible explanation of biological development in causal terms apart from teleology. That is where the debate stands today.

- 1.4.35                    Until its recent intellectual collapse, nineteenth and twentieth century **Marxism** sought to furnish an historical, economic and social theory which is self-consciously materialist and determinist in outlook. Power was gained through fierce struggle and at enormous cost of human life. Vast populations were forcibly subjected to a materialist view of human behavior and history and a false, cocksure eschatology. All areas of human activity -- religion, the arts, education, science, engineering, medicine, family life -- were cruelly forced into the materialist straight-jacket. At the end, Marxist leaders themselves conceded failure of their ideology, almost casually, which belied the death and terror they visited upon untold millions. The speed of Marxism's collapse was startling. More amazing was the sense of relief among the long-suffering peoples it had subjugated. They were glad to get rid of an unreal ideology which had promised heaven on earth.
- 1.4.36                    Since the nineteenth century it may be said that the struggle within the Materialist tradition is how to humanize a purely causal view of the world which has randomly come about and is essentially purposeless. Modern forms of Materialism are tending away from their traditional fatalism toward human meaning as the norm for science. The about-face of Ernst Bloch in re-fashioning his determinist Marxist view of history into an open-ended view in which humans can shape the future, is a case in point. Freud's materialism was overlaid by a superordinate principle: a scientific theory which on purely naturalistic lines attempted to create an anthropocentric view of reality. In ancient times the Epicureans turned Materialism quickly into a hedonist philosophy and life style. Modern materialists cannot seem to enjoy life. They cannot seem to escape issues of alienation and discord which daunt purely behavioral explanation. The anthropic principle and focus tend to dominate modern Materialist dialogue. Comte's vision of the science of man at the center of all concerns has come about. Ultimate meaning has now become human meaning. How is this to be framed and to what ends?
- 1.4.37                    Has American Humanist hedonism, a more benign form of Materialism, done better?
- 1.4.38                    Purely behavioral focus on the affective side of human nature has come full circle from Epicurean *ataraxia* (pleasurable imperturbability) and Stoic *apatheia* (emotional detachment) to modern absorption with emotion and mood. Emotional intelligence (the so-called Emotional Quotient (EQ), beyond the meaning of (IQ) is proposed as the next stage of human awareness: to know what you and others are feeling and to accommodate to those feelings. This is proposed on a purely behavioral not spiritual footing. We are fundamentally bundles of feelings. That "we" can control what is described in terms of electro-chemical functions of the body and brain appears to be a confusion of thought.
- 1.4.39                    Is the solution to human discontent to be found in mapping the genetic code to discover chemical ways to alleviate the sense of alienation and distress among so many moderns? Or, does such mapping yield the conclusion that natively we cannot push the boundaries of technology further and that we, as the ancient Stoics said, must adopt *apatheia* - resignation to the inevitabilities of life -- because of the limitations of brain evolution? How do we know this if, in fact, it is a genetic limitation? Or, has the time come to ask whether hedonism has reached its nadir?
- 1.4.40                    Can we live on the basis of cosmic meaninglessness, purposelessness and, ultimately, of irrelevance, or do we merely exist? Having won in the intellectual arena of the public market-place it appears that hedonism is unable to enjoy the spoils of victory. While claiming science on its side and that moderns can no longer have their heads in the sand so far as God and religion are concerned, they have instead thrust their heads into a helmet -- the hi-tech hood which claims to create Virtual Reality. This is not reality but myth. Humans are more than machines, whether described mechanically as in the past or

in terms of electro-chemical impulses as at present. Moderns have been hoodwinked by Hedonistic Materialism. The pursuit of pleasure and happiness as ends in themselves without meaning ends in frustration.

1.4.41 In the debate between Materialism and Christianity key issues highlight the paradigmatic differences between the systems. In fresh ways these differences compel re-evaluation of received premises and principles of Materialist theory:

1.4.42 **(a) The ultimate nature of reality.** The empirical reality of the physical world has never been a point of contention between Materialists and Christians as it has been between some Idealists and Christians. However, is the world purely matter (not substance, but dynamically conceived in modern terms as energy), or is there also spiritual reality? Currently this debate focuses less on arguments for the existence of God, because much of recent philosophical theology reflects the panpsychism of Process Philosophy, than it does on the mind/body distinction and relationships. Is mind an epiphenomenon, the functioning of physical brain, or is mind spiritual reality; that is, for Christians, discrete non-reducible personhood? Note the work of Karl Popper, John Eccles and Roger Penrose, to mention but a few prominent writers on this subject.

1.4.43 **(b) The concept of causation.** It appears that absolute mechanical uniformity has been jettisoned as the definition of cause, or has been seriously revised. The Principle of Indeterminacy formulated within Quantum Physics appears to have undermined the concept of causal predetermination. Contingency and discontinuity must be taken into account as real factors however a scientifically dependable universe is described. The trend now is toward organicism, but materialist causal explanation of the processes in such a world has been singularly unconvincing. Even in Chaos Theory it is being postulated that rational patterns apparently inhere in what appear to be random processes. Appeal to final causes is again being made by some physicists who find randomness and chance to be inadequate explanations of the complexity, beauty and intelligibility of the universe. They (for example, Paul Davies) argue that life and mind may be built into nature and that a case can be made for an ultimate purpose to existence. Note also the work of C. A. Coulson, John Polkinghorne, Robert Russell and Russell Stannard.

1.4.44 **(c) The question of determinism and freedom.** This is a corollary of the question as to the nature of cause. Materialism is deterministic. Its psychological form such as that of I. P. Pavlov and B. F. Skinner posits that freedom is an illusion. For Christians, contingency and freedom are realities of the world as we know it. Note the recent work of Arthur Koestler and Karl Popper on the unreality of determinism.

1.4.45 **(d) The question of values.** Many now argue that psychological determinism and moral relativism undermine the essential nature of human beings and furnish no grounds for forming a reasonable and just society. This is the heritage of the Hedonistic Materialism of John Dewey, Y. H. Krikorian, J. H. Randall, A. L. Hilliard and many other American philosophers of the Naturalism School. Values are functions of behavioral responses and are generalized by societal custom. That is good which furthers an activity and wrong which fails to do so. That is good which is in the interest of the subject. R. B. Perry said that of the available options, his definition is that value is any object of any interest (the other options being that value may be irrelevant to interest, may be a qualified object of interest, or may be an object of qualified interest). This conclusion totally relativizes value. It is at the heart of the current values debate in America. That is good which fulfills, pleases or satisfies me now. How one can say on this premise that any act is wrong remains a puzzle. Combined with the psychological determinism of Pavlov and Skinner, responsibility for behavior is seriously undermined or canceled. Note the recent work of James Q. Wilson and William Bennett, among many.

- 1.4.46                    **(e) Death and the life to come.** The Epicurean quip that we not fear death because when we are here death is not and that when death is here we are not falls on modern ears as cold comfort when combined with the idea of a purposeless universe. To what point is life itself? Is Bertrand Russell's hymn to materialist fatalism the last word? For Christians the final hope is the life to come when by the divine standard of righteousness the evils of this world will be judged and God's purposes vindicated. On what grounds is such a faith held?

### 1.5.0 - The Creation Paradigm

- 1.5.1                    If the Christian Gospel is based upon a paradigm different from both the Idealist and Materialist paradigms, what are the central, cohering features of that paradigm?
- 1.5.2                    The creationist paradigm is a proposition about the real: That the universe is objectively real to our senses and that it is a dependable universe, not a chaos, so that what happens here under given conditions will happen there under the same conditions. It is an ordered universe.
- 1.5.3                    In these respects the fundamental interests of Christianity and science coincide. The universe is not a figment of the imagination. It is real. Objective criteria govern our knowledge of it and interaction with it. Antirealism is the result of a peculiar modern hubris. That nothing at all exists apart from language and meaning; that there are no brute facts but only facts dependent upon the human mind, flies in the face of reality. There is a reality out there which is totally independent of us, which is not simply the chimera of a social contract we have unwittingly entered into. Christianity rejects the modern flight from reason.
- 1.5.4                    In the Judaic-Christian world view the universe is important. It is elegant in form, displaying beauty and marvels of coherence and life-giving properties. It is not Maya - an illusion, nor inherently evil-infected, nor simply a regrettable staging point for a higher level of reality.
- 1.5.5                    Christian faith is sympathetic to the aims of science to demystify nature. Christians distinguish between puzzles and mystery. The universe is a puzzle which science can help us to sort out. Christians seek to understand it. Understanding the wonders of the physical world scatters ignorance and dispels the fog of superstition, whether of the secular or of the religious variety.
- 1.5.6                    Because Christians believe that God has created a dependable world they do not invoke miracle casually. They believe that God has at specific times and in specific places worked wonders to reveal his purposes, but they do not claim miracles to be on-going, daily occurrences or that they are a necessary factor to vindicate faith.
- 1.5.7                    Christians believe that the universe was created by God (*creatio ex nihilo*) and that it is sustained providentially and purposefully by God. They delight in the grandeur of the created order and deem themselves to be careful stewards of it, but they do not worship it. They worship its creator. Athenagoras, Athenian philosopher-convert of the late second century C.E., wrote to the great Stoic philosopher-Emperor Marcus Aurelius: *Beautiful, indeed, is the world, in its all-embracing grandeur, in the arrangement of the stars, both those in the circle of the ecliptic and those at the Septentrion, and in its form as a sphere. Yet it is not the world, but its maker, who should be worshipped.*
- 1.5.8                    Contingency and freedom are realities in the dependable created order. Christians reject determinism and fatalism.

- 1.5.9 God and the universe are different orders of reality: the universe depends constantly upon God for its existence but God does not depend upon the universe for his life and perfections. Christians reject the Finite God theory of Process Theology, namely, that divinity is restricted to the universe as a coming-to-be inherent principle.
- 1.5.10 God is personal and he acts personally to create and sustain the universe in accordance with purposes he has disclosed, which the universe reflects. God's activity in creation is not a necessary expression of Being, but of his will. God is free to create or not to create, to create this sort of world or some other sort.
- 1.5.11 There is a spiritual order which is metaphysically different from the physical order. Spirit does not mean non-material reality in a generalized, non-personal or trans-personal sense. For Christians spirit is defined as discrete personhood.
- 1.5.12 The ultimate nature of reality is that of persons and personal relationships. Grace is a function of those personal relationships in virtue of which freedom is real. Grace is a pre-condition to freedom, whether in the relations between God and human beings, or of human beings among themselves.
- 1.5.13 Human beings, male and female, were created by God to be spiritual and material beings. They were created in his image. This means discrete spiritual or personal reality. They were created for fellowship with God and with one another. Their personal destiny lies within the redemptive purposes of God. The final state will not be trans-personal absorption into impersonal spirit, but will be personal and interpersonal.
- 1.5.14 The righteousness of God, which reflects his holiness, is the norm of all morality, of that which is good and that which is evil. The righteousness of God is an unconditional standard of value. God does not define good and evil arbitrarily. While one may concur with Plato that all that which is good and right relates to ultimate Good as a transcendental standard, Christians argue that good and right are what God wills.
- 1.5.15 Right and wrong stand for objective characteristics which attach directly and inalienably to acts and their consequences. It is always better to do right than to do wrong.
- 1.5.16 That which is good and right must be judged morally by a standard higher than the greatest good for the greatest number or by that which is conducive to the maximum possible good.
- 1.5.17 Nor can the standard be purely affective, relative to feeling, in the sense that good is that which fulfills need or gratifies and bad is that which fails to fulfill need or inflicts pain. Moral judgments are more than biologically or socially induced responses.
- 1.5.18 Evil is an element alien to the creation and the purposes of God. It is not inherent in the physical order as a built-in element against which God must struggle, nor is it an eternal principle competing with God or the Good as the Manicheans said.
- 1.5.19 Can there be a problem of evil in a Materialist system if there is no over-riding standard of value?
- 1.5.20 It is false to say that only good is real and that evil is an illusion as Hinduism and Christian Science say. It is equally false to say that only evil is real and that good is an illusion, as some Satanists say. It is false to deny the distinction between good and evil, as relativists say. Evil is a reality. In Christian teaching only good is eternally and ultimately real, but evil is a present reality within the created universe. Like contingency and freedom, evil must be accepted as a reality within the created order which cannot be explained away or dissolved into some more ultimate reality.

- 1.5.21 Evil cannot be cured verbally. It cannot be redefined as good in the sense that ultimately it will be seen to be part of infinite spirit in a universe which, despite appearances, is totally and perfectly coherent.
- 1.5.22 Four kinds of evil are apparent: ignorance, ugliness or distortion, suffering, and sin. Of these sin is the worst and appears to be the fountain of the others.
- 1.5.23 The problem of evil is at its sharpest in Christian faith. Christianity teaches that God who is good, omniscient and omnipotent, created the kind of world in which evil could arise. God did not create evil. He created the conditions in which evil could arise.
- 1.5.24 That ultimate reality is of the nature of persons and personal life coheres with the Christian doctrine of creation, of grace and freedom, and of evil having originated in the Fall of created creatures, a rebellion permitted by God. The doctrine of Creation and the Fall places the existence of evil within a moral model: a universe in which sin is the first evil. This is in contrast to dualist, illusionist or determinist models as to the origin and nature of evil.
- 1.5.25 Sin is a moral reality, which God judges. Salvation comes not by illumination, but by God's action, an action in which God himself through the incarnation of Christ and the atonement accepts responsibility for creating the kind of world in which sin and other forms of evil could arise. In grace God acts. He is both just and the justifier of the guilty.
- 1.5.26 History is a one-way process from creation to consummation in the final Kingdom which God intends to establish. Human beings are morally responsible to God and will answer to him for deeds and for the use they make of the world he has made.
- 1.5.27 The ultimate purpose of God is freedom. By creation, and through redemption from the guilt and judgment of sin, God purposes to fashion free good persons who will share his fellowship and work: *Lo, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I come to do thy will, O God.*
- 1.5.28 There is one God, one world, one history, one morality.

#### **1.6.0 - Postscript**

- 1.6.1 I have lived in an era of profound self-deception. From childhood I recall the heated Marxism-oriented debates in Canada on the doorsteps of immigrant homes, which rhapsodized about the arrival of the well-provisioned classless society and leisure to enjoy the ample fruits of less and less work. In this century, Marxist materialism sacrificed more people on the altar of ideology than has any other system in human history.
- 1.6.2 American Humanism is a more benign form of modern bourgeois Materialism (benign, I think, because of Christian principles which infuse American culture). Nevertheless, modern Humanism's determinist view of the world and human nature, its misguided educational and social ideals which jettisoned traditional values, its eccentric economic utopianism which took no account of the human sinfulness of both those who govern and those who are governed, its identification of love with lust and altruism with self-interest, and its hostility to religion have produced only a thin, unsustainable metaphysics and joyless hedonism - a hedonism, along with its residual frustration, which is strikingly portrayed in Ecclesiastes chapter 2. This is a world view and life style buttressed by mores which are based upon self-gratification masquerading as morality.

According to the Humanists, human beings are behaviorally conditioned and determined creatures who should entertain no illusions about the ultimate meaning of life.

- 1.6.3 Attempts at humanizing traditional materialism are now dividing younger American Naturalists from the older tradition in their effort to displace determinist notions of causality with a more organic, i.e., human, view. Nevertheless, there remain those, such as Richard Rorty, who maintain that any human activity, whether speech, thought, theory, poetry or music, will turn out to be completely predictable in purely materialistically causal fashion (atoms-in-the-void micro processes).
- 1.6.4 Advocates of a sociologically based Naturalism contend that a phenomenological approach allows for reconstruction of method to avoid a positivistic view of science. They hold that contingency must be preserved within which agents can make choices. There is no longer need to insist that explanation can proceed only by subsuming all data under rigid law.
- 1.6.5 This is a remarkable concession, which is parallel to the abandonment of historical determinism by recent Marxists. Nevertheless, in principle it can carry one into never-never land. On this premise there exist, not individual minds, but individuals with socially formed minds who are bearers of cultural systems. How this allows for freedom or choice remains a mystery because if mind is a social product then surely the probability (far beyond mere possibility) of the formation of a social supermind precludes agency. If mind is social, persons are still subsumed under or absorbed by some other reality.
- 1.6.6 In the effort to humanize minds as being more than properties or causal series in nature the theory neither accounts for agency or choice nor does it escape the implications of its own language which attributes content to minds. If beliefs may not be true, what does true mean if mind is a social product? How do "we" "know" that something is not true? The reality of falsification belies denial of the existence of individual minds.
- 1.6.7 Nor are current Idealist mythologies, which are spin-offs of Eastern as well as Western Idealism, of any greater comfort, despite their promises of defining our existence in terms of divinity. They are equally determinist. All is predetermined in absolute Being. In their view individual persons are probably a mistake. They are but ephemeral reflections of another world. "I am God" really means "I look forward to absorption in infinity as the final cure for individuality."
- 1.6.8 Idealist approaches to religion will forever spin fantastic theories, but the contemporary issues really belong intellectually to the Materialists and Naturalists. Here Christians have an unparalleled opportunity to restate the true nature of human beings as creatures created in the image of God.
- 1.6.9 Modern alienation from a personal God and traditional values has not produced utopia. How can it when freedom, the foundation of personhood, is denied? Materialism and Idealism are both fundamentally threats to what it means to be human. While the argument against Christian faith usually focuses on theistic belief, attention ought equally to focus on argument as to the essential nature of persons. In this respect, Christian belief is a call to the defense of humanity.
- 1.6.10 While Christian faith rests upon the cornerstone of the freedom and purposes of God, its elegant superstructure is a monument of respect for the creation, especially as a tribute to human persons being individual, permanent, non-reducible spiritual realities and creative agents. Persons who are free and creative are the goal of God's activity and the center of God's interest. They are not simply bundles of energy which respond to stimuli. Creation and grace, personhood and freedom, creativity and responsibility resist

reduction of human nature to unfreedom. On the Christian view, the higher the spirituality of personal life, the less causally predictable it is, because such predictability proves to be banal. Creative innovation is the mark of spirituality and free personhood. Choices are increased. Possibilities are enhanced. The Christian revelation declares that persons are intended to be co-workers with God.

- 1.6.11 It remains to delineate the basis and rationale of the Christian revelational claim to religious uniqueness, which I hold to be supportive of genuine science and the scientific enterprise. To what ends? The short answer is stewardship. The knowledge of God does not end in religious experience. It must end in service, namely, being co-workers with God to care for and embrace the values of creation and to foster the well-being of human beings as objects of God's love.
- 1.6.12 Nevertheless, any attempt to formulate a Christian theological statement will reach in a number of directions and in the nature of the case it will reflect issues within a specific historical context.
- 1.6.13 There are many instructive examples of this. **Athenagoras** in about 175 C.E. addressed an apologetic to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius stating in detail Christian beliefs about the nature of God in view of the false public perceptions that Christians were atheists because they denied the gods.
- 1.6.14 As well, he argued that Christians do not waste time splitting innumerable ethical hairs; they "do not rehearse speeches, but evidence good deeds," he said, including abhorring homosexual practice and predatory paedophiles, abortion and incest. The beauties of creation, he goes on to say, lead Christian to praise their Creator, not gods who are often merely projections of human vices.
- 1.6.15 **John Wyclif** (1328-1384), scandalized by abuses in the pastoral office, wrote reforming theological treatises which reinterpreted that role for both clergy and laity, re-interpreted the Eucharist, and called upon the church to acknowledge in practice the "Rule of faith of Scripture." Abuses and practices of the time called forth a particular theological response.
- 1.6.16 History is replete with other examples. **Luther's** critique of the theory of penances and indulgences, the sacraments, the authority of Pope and Councils called forth his magisterial work on the authority of the Scriptures and justification by faith. Radical reform preached by **Baptists** and later by **Methodists** focused attention upon personal, public Christian discipleship, later contributed to revision of understanding of the role of religion and church in the state, and contributed to the rise of free, democratic enterprise economies.
- 1.6.17 Theology is belief, doctrine, dogma (hopefully as principles of understanding rather than as repressive dogmatism). It is a statement of Christian beliefs developed according to a plan, a plan which is shaped by the exigencies and needs of the times. In the now quaint language of a past generation it is "the science of divine things," (Richard Hooker, d.1600). But theology is much more. Nothing that is Christian can be thought or said without theology. Every Christian utterance inevitably makes a theological statement. The recitation of the Creed (whether the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed or the Creed of Chalcedon), cataphetical study, a church Confession or Statement of faith, hymns, prayers, preaching, counseling -- all of these make theological statements or infer theological concepts. *It is their function to do so*, as well as to be vehicles of felt religious experience.
- 1.6.18 What is the function of my theological statement in light of the contemporary cultural context? I note the following:

- 1.6.19                    1. **To touch the bases of mainstream Christianity;** to summarize the confessional heritage of the church, not merely as historical traditions, but as reflecting the "Rule of Faith," which term historically identifies authentic apostolic Christianity. The intent is to summarize, as faithfully as I can, truths of biblically centered apostolic faith and their continuity within the life of the major Christian traditions.
- 1.6.20                    2. To reflect awareness of the **implications of the apostolic tradition for inter-church relations.** The helpful attempts by The Faith and Order groups, notably the recent *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* study to identify generic apostolic teaching which could serve as the foundation for more irenic attitudes among the Christian traditions, are but a beginning. How can the attitudes which create destructive politics, the lust for religious power, ethnic prejudice and misguided nationalism, be transformed? Perhaps by renewed focus upon essential elements of the "Rule of Faith," namely, Apostolic Christianity.
- 1.6.21                    3. To continue the task of **framing Christian understanding of the world into a modern hermeneutic.** Inevitably the Christian Gospel entails a set of truth claims. For example, that God's relation to the world should be understood in terms other than those of Process Theology; that the economic, historical and social implications of Christianity should be understood in other than Marxist terms; and that human beings should be viewed not merely as stimulus-response organisms for whom the palliative of need-satisfaction ought to suffice, but be treasured as objects of God's providential concern and redemptive love. Christian theology must always be a relentless pursuit of the truth, but this pursuit must reflect humility, not arrogance. I contend that the truth of the matter, scientifically as well as philosophically and theologically, is that it is better to see humans as creative agents whose function (*arete*) is to be profoundly morally motivated toward stewardship of life and resources. Such an hermeneutic comprises a divine advocacy. It also entails prophetic courage to rebuke all sorts of evil, abuse, distortion, lies, delusion, corruption, pride and indifference, but it is a prophetic stance which invites correction, even falsification.
- 1.6.22                    There is much that Christian theologians write about which is unclear, at times even misleading. We have done little in modern times to expound a credible statement of on-going divine creativity in the world process, or of divine providence. We have said little about the philosophical implications of intercessory prayer in a scientifically dependable world. Conviction as to the historical authenticity and validity of the biblical record, as regards, for example, the truth of the Incarnation did not lead framers of the creedal statements of the church to make arrogant philosophical claims. The Nicene Creed does not purport to explain the mystery of the Incarnation. The extended, probing discussions of the fourth century C.E. show how carefully they eschewed intellectual arrogance while strongly affirming apostolic truth. They finally worded the Creed in a manner which sets the boundaries of faith in Christ as the incarnate Son of God, not hypothesizing as to what it takes for God and man to be metaphysically united in the one historical person Jesus Christ.
- 1.6.23                    4. To never forget **the chief mandate given to every Christian, which is evangelism.** This is a mission to call men and women everywhere to hear about and respond to God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ. In modern American life the job description for this task entails comprehending the life-view of a secular mentality. The task is how to communicate the Christian Gospel to a society which has achieved prosperity and the Epicurean good life. The ethos of this society is that of an uncritically held, soft-headed hedonist materialism, in contrast to the cynicism of its European skeptical counterpart. The European version is garnished with the veneer of national churches which have become anachronistic social appendages. In America, tolerance for religion has spawned interest in religion chiefly as a sociological phenomenon. The polite, uncritical public balancing of improbable beliefs has long since shifted religion from its spiritual and moral foundations and that is the role the modern secular mind

would like to assign to Christian faith. The prophetic message of Christians to society must still be the Gospel of judgment and grace as the best defense of essential human nature. This life-view holds that the appropriate end of prosperity is not self-gratification but responsibility which issues from a heart full of love and gratitude to God.

# REVELATION

Samuel J. Mikolaski

## OUTLINE

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### 2.0.0 - Definition

- 2.0.1 Revelation is knowledge of God and the purposes of God acquired through divine disclosure. The core truths of the revelation are that God is creator and redeemer. Grasping these truths entails human insight. Disclosure and insight are correlatives in any revelatory situation. Failure to accept or to grasp the truths of the revelation invalidates neither the objectivity of the revelation nor its truths.

### 2.1.0 - Parameters of the Christian Claim to Revelation

- 2.1.1 Any claim to revelation is a claim to truth.
- 2.1.2 The truths of the Christian revelation are given normatively and authoritatively in the canonical scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament.
- 2.1.3 Trustworthy judgment is required to interpret the scriptures.
- 2.1.4 Three axiomatic truths follow from trustworthy interpretation of the scriptures:
  - (a) That there is only one true, living, triune God, creator and sustainer of the world.
  - (b) That Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God who came to redeem the world from its sin and evil.
  - (c) That God in his own time will establish his kingdom upon a redeemed earth and will raise the dead to life and final judgment.

### 2.2.0 - Revelation and Truth

- 2.2.1 In theology as in science truth (*aletheia*) must be the main pulling force. The alethic pole must always be the focus.

- 2.2.2 Truth is a function of statements which purport to state that which is actually the case.
- 2.2.3 Truth is not divine self-manifestation in contrast to or as a negation of knowing that something is the case and stating that truth propositionally.
- 2.2.4 Any claim to truth entails a form of correspondence, namely the relation of the truth of assertions to what they are about and only after that a form of coherence, namely the relation of one true sentence to another. In the strictest sense it is not a definition of truth that is offered. Rather, it is the adjectival use of 'true' as stating that which is the case; that a sentence is true if it reports the facts. A proposition is true if it denotes an actual state of affairs: that there is a correspondence between a statement and a fact.
- 2.2.5 Correspondence does not involve structural similarity between a statement and a fact. It trivializes the issue to say that nothing can be said *about* God because he is ineffable and that therefore we can have only knowledge *of* God, which concludes that revelation can not be propositional. Revelational language like other descriptive language is a meta-language. We employ a language to speak about language. To speak about facts we employ names of facts. We can thus speak about statements and facts and about the correspondence between a statement and a fact. "Correspondence to the facts" becomes "it is true," predicable of statements. Truth is objective. It is a property of theories not merely a belief. The validity is objective.
- 2.2.6 True thought is where we grasp accurately the nature of the objects of thought. The logic in the things known is one with the logic in thought. The truth of revelational propositions consists in God's being and the world's being what the sentences say.
- 2.2.7 The foregoing runs counter to the view that all truth including scientific knowledge is subjective, which is to say that statements may be meaningful but not true.
- 2.2.8 We cannot escape ourselves in our quest for objectivity. Nevertheless, the sole aim in the pursuit of knowledge must be to accept the world as one finds it, not as one wishes it to be. We press forward in an unending quest to know the truth of the way things are. In doing so, we acknowledge the paradox of faith that the things we are thinking about do make sense and will make sense in the future. This faith is the unshakable conviction in the truth of warranted assertions based on credible evidence. This includes belief in God and in the credibility of the Bible.
- 2.2.9 We utilize categories or paradigms to make sense of the data of experience. By means of these we arrange and shape the data of experience for understanding. Examples: Creationist, Materialist or Idealist categories will condition the way evidence as to the nature of the world is seen.
- 2.2.10 Categories and evidence interact. The growth of human knowledge depends upon the continual revision of categories by new evidence.
- 2.2.11 The real battle is not over feelings or words but over true theories or categories which come near the truth.
- 2.2.12 Truth is the objective and the main regulative principle in the criticism of theories. A key question in doing theology, as in doing science, is under what conditions would one admit that a theory is untenable? Without theories or paradigms we cannot even begin thinking. Criticism is a process of error elimination more than it is a process of theory validation.
- 2.2.13 For Christians the paradigm by means of which the world is understood is the creation of the world by God *ex nihilo*. The key category of the creation paradigm is that

ultimate reality is of the nature of persons and personal relations. There is no higher reality. Nothing on any alleged chain of being can be said to be a higher level of reality. Christian understanding and claim to truth is that God is personal and good, that he has made us for freedom, and that he desires that we become free good persons who share his life and work.

- 2.2.14 This conception of reality accepts the evidence of the perceived pattern at face value. It does not allow for reduction of one element to terms of any other. These include: the reality of discrete persons with intelligence, the reality of objective morality, the reality of a scientifically dependable created order, and the reality of contingency in which true freedom is possible. Within the terms of this paradigm sin, responsibility and redemption make sense as to the truth of the human condition and prospects.

### **2.3.0 - Revelation and Religious Experience**

- 2.3.1 The Christian claim does not rest on the perpetual unmediated immediacy of God for true knowledge of him.
- 2.3.2 Revelation is not an expression of human religious instincts. It is the self-disclosure of God to human beings, not the disclosure of God by them. The initiative is God's.
- 2.3.3 Existentialist religious modalities have defined revelation idiosyncratically as "only God reveals God," or as "God speaking to me now commands my obedience."
- 2.3.4 This is different from the claims to faith in God and Christ of apostolic Christianity. Apostolic teaching calls for response to God through faith in Jesus Christ, which faith is begotten and nurtured within a paradigm of historical understanding and truths about God and the world. The Bible gives the distillation of those truths.
- 2.3.5 Believing is a disposition but belief by itself is not the crux of Christian understanding. Independent of evidence the White Queen's believing "as many as six impossible things before breakfast" can be justified on the basis of the will to believe. The Christian gospel makes a truth claim.
- 2.3.6 Because Christianity is based upon claims to an historical revelation it must in the nature of the case be revelation conveyed by propositions which are either true or false. There appears to be no reason why a revelation cannot be given in human language. The canonical scriptures serve this function.

### **2.4.0 - Revelation and History**

- 2.4.1 Revelation is historical. It occurs in history, within space and time.
- 2.4.2 Revelation is not historical process. Revelation is not the Absolute disclosing itself in history. Nor is revelation the finite God coming-to-be, or moving to self-realization within the cosmic process. Revelation is the transcendent, personal creator's acting and speaking in history.
- 2.4.3 It follows therefore that in the dispute between religions and philosophies which denigrate the actual world and claim supra-rational, transcendental encounter, ecstasy and non-propositional forms of revelation, as against a religion which claims that the historical events and statements are the actual forms the eternal realities take, Christians must opt for the latter. The events of which Christians speak are not realities merely to faith. They are concrete in the real world. Events such as the resurrection of Christ must mean that they are reportable.

- 2.4.4 Historical concreteness means that God's revelations are to this person in this place at this time. Thenceforth the essential truths of those disclosures become normative for others at all times and in all places. The revelation was historically given specifically somewhere to someone and thereafter to everyone. Thus Abraham's and Moses' understanding about God and the teaching of John and Paul about Jesus Christ are normative for the church and for any claims to the experience of God and of Christ. But my own experiences, or claims to experience, though they may be true and helpful if they reflect the prophetic and apostolic truths authentically, are not normative in the sense in which Abraham's and Moses' understanding are.
- 2.4.5 Revelation is both a given and is progressive, but it is not evolutionary. The Bible records a progressive revelation of promise and fulfillment which is consummated in Jesus Christ. There is ever a fuller disclosure until Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, in every revelatory situation God is known truly as God. Successive steps disclose an unfolding of God's purposes.
- 2.4.6 God has disclosed himself through his work of creation and by sustaining the created order. This knowledge is available to everyone but is grasped by us to varying degrees of accuracy. In question is not the validity of such knowledge but its distortion by human beings due to sin. By means of his revelation and work of redemption God offers to change our understanding of who he is and to redeem humanity from its sinful condition.
- 2.4.7 Divine revelation and human insight are part of both general and special revelation. Thus it is better to speak not of general and special revelation, but of the revelation of God as creator and the revelation of God as redeemer. Both entail the divine initiative and both entail the grasping of the truth by human beings. The foregoing is based on the following premises:
- 2.4.8 (a) that human beings cannot discover truths behind God's back. God is the source of all truth.
- 2.4.9 (b) that there is no field where human beings discover truth without divine assistance - which appears to have been the view of Pelagius.
- 2.4.10 (c) that God does not give revelations to creatures incapable of receiving them.

### **2.5.0 - The Concept of Scripture**

- 2.5.1 The most important point about the authority of the Bible for Christian faith and in the faith and life of the post-apostolic church is not any particular theory of inspiration nor historical argument as to the formation of the New Testament canon leading up to Athanasius' Festal Letter of 367 A.D. which, so far as available records can show, is the earliest all-in-one list of the Christian biblical canon.
- 2.5.2 Rather, it is the concept of scripture which is generic to the earliest Christian writings. This is not a thesis which they argue. It is the air the writers breathe. So far as the patristic writers are concerned, God is the ultimate author of the scriptures. Scripture, and scripture alone is the norm of authentic Christianity and therefore is the divinely given mirror to use for spiritual self-examination. When early church fathers employ formulae such as "the Rule of Faith" or "the Rule of our Tradition" they mean summaries of the truths of the Christian faith which are authentic; that is, truths apostolically mandated as recorded in scripture, not post-apostolically invented teachings.
- 2.5.3 It is mischievous to say that "the church put the Bible together" and by that to imply that therefore the church controls scripture and is its only authentic interpreter. Never

does one find the churches of the patristic period acting as lords of scripture. Those persons who did, such as Marcion, were quickly identified as heretics. Post-apostolic Christian writers invariably convey the impression that *they stand under* scripture authority.

2.5.4 The place of the concept of scripture in the life of the early church is vital to our understanding of the authority of the Christian canon, though we cheerfully recognize that the canon was only gradually formalized.

2.5.5 The scriptures are an historical record of past pronouncements and events and of interpretive insights into these. The scriptures comprise an authoritative record because they are given by divine inspiration. Authentic interpretation of the scriptures yields their essential teachings. Warranted assertability; that is, teaching based upon authentic interpretation of scripture, is the ground for formulating on-going Christian teaching. Always, however, continuity with apostolic faith is the norm for defining, shaping and limiting Christian witness and doctrine. In essence this means the biblical canon. Christianity is essentially a scriptural religion.

### 2.6.0 - The Inspiration of Scripture

2.6.1 The concept of scripture derives from the conviction that "God spoke by the prophets." The mode of this speaking to humanity through the prophets and the apostolic writers is through the divine inspiration of the written text. The Bible is the word of God written.

2.6.2 Inspiration raises issues which are primarily psychological and theological. The formation of the canon poses questions which are chiefly historical and theological.

2.6.3 Inspiration refers to the origin of those writings which are deemed to be scripture. Inspiration validates their integrity as being God's word.

2.6.4 The scriptures have immense esthetic value as superb literature and as the impetus to many forms of art. In these respects they are products of human creativity. Nevertheless, inspiration is not specifically human creativity even though creativity is a vehicle of its working.

2.6.5 Nor is inspiration specifically the product of ecstasy or divination. Occasionally, dreams and trances were vehicles of divine communication. But soothsaying, fortune-telling and the occult are condemned. What occurs in an ecstatic state may be reported, but the report, if part of the inspired writings, is not the product of automatic writing or oracle speaking. Something other than manticism is in view.

2.6.6 Three representative biblical passages may be cited which illustrate the concept of scripture and affirm the fact of inspiration. However, they leave us in a quandry as to how the inspiring process actually worked.

2.6.7 First: *John* 10:34-35. Jesus' affirmation of the inviolability of scripture has been decisive creedally for Christians. He says that scripture is unfailing. It cannot be broken. Here the term "law" may be taken to embrace the canon of the Old Testament.

2.6.8 Second: *2 Peter* 1:19-21. Peter says that Christian faith does not rest on fables but upon attested to facts. This is the intent of the phrase "the prophetic word made sure," which refers to promise and fulfillment. Such scriptures did not derive from human impulse, "but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." The term signifies the writer's being "borne along." Does this mean guided, or superintended, or prompted, or carried along to a goal? We simply cannot say.

- 2.6.9 Third: *2 Timothy* 3:15-17. "Sacred writings" in verse 15 reflects the concept of holy scripture. "Every" or "all" scripture in verse 16 applies distributively to the parts as it may collectively to the whole. Probably the sense is: "seeing that every scripture is God-breathed it is as well profitable." Critical to accurate understanding of this text is that the product is said to be inspired. The passage does not describe the process of inspiration nor does it define the extent of the canon. It simply states, quite dramatically, that that which is scripture is God-breathed. From this follows the church's conviction that that which is scripture collectively comprises a canon.
- 2.6.10 Christians agree that inspiration sets the canonical books apart from all other literature as God's word. But they have not been able to agree as to the psychological processes which were involved, except to reflect instincts which resist making of the authors passive or manipulated instruments. The writing is human. The inspiration is divine. The product is God's word. The passages cited stress the results, not the process.
- 2.6.11 Language and revelation are tied together. God uses language as the primary way to convey his revelation as a Gospel for proclamation. The means for producing this is divine inspiration. Little further can be said. Though written with regard to a different subject, the following felicitous comment by Karl Popper is appropriate and aptly relevant here: increase of linguistic precision usually leads to loss of clarity.
- 2.6.12 Confessionally, submission to scripture is a mind-set which reflects acceptance of the truth of the concept of there being such a thing as divinely inspired writings more than it is creedal subscription. Karl Barth's rejection of the evangelical understanding of biblical inspiration nevertheless did not inhibit his constant appeal to the scriptures as authoritative for the formation of Christian theology. For all practical purposes his handling of scripture is no different from that of most evangelical scholars. Mood is the critical factor. Christians and churches must give the impression of humbly standing under the authority of scripture not of being lords of scripture. They may not put the authority of tradition on a parallel track with the scriptures. Scripture defines, conserves and delimits apostolic faith.
- 2.6.13 The New Hampshire Confession of 1833 is one of the loveliest of confessional statements as to the nature and place of the Holy Scriptures for Christians:
- We believe the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true centre of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.*

## **2.7.0 - The Christian Biblical Canon**

- 2.7.1 While the OT and the NT are jointly held to be the canon of scripture, the historical processes of their respective formations differ.

### **2.7.2 - The OT Canon**

- 2.7.2 The OT canon is the Bible of Israel and was the first Bible of the first Christians, chiefly in the Septuagint version.
- 2.7.3 The traditional theologically conservative view of the formation of the OT canon makes the following claims:

(a) The concept of scripture is decisive to understand what the OT canon comprises. The OT books were regarded by the Jews, by Jesus and by the apostles as intrinsically holy (books that "render the hands unclean"). These are strictly limited to the 22 books of the Hebrew Bible and they are of inviolable verbal form.

(b) Divisions of the OT canon are: the Torah, the Former and Later Prophets and the Writings.

(c) The canon was complete probably by the time of Ezra, which was confirmed at Jamnia by Jewish scholars in the last decade of the first century of the Christian era.

2.7.4

Critical revisions of the conservative tradition, such as the view of A. C. Sundberg, have moved beyond the Graff-Wellhausen theory:

(a) The early church adopted a wider, Alexandrian canon, which included the Apocrypha.

(b) Extra-canonical literature was comfortably used by Christians. Inspiration should be regarded as a category wider than canon.

(c) Inspiration opens every church age to verisimilitude. New authoritative religious writings may be accorded canonical status.

At times churches of the several episcopal traditions claim that church encyclicals and non-biblical traditions are religiously authoritative alongside scripture. Nevertheless, within those churches it is deemed hazardous to place anything alongside the apostolic or apostolically mandated writings. Thus while those who claim apostolic succession agree on the principle, in actual practice they end up heavily qualifying that claim. Argument ensues as to which encyclicals, extra-canonical writings or traditions may be authoritative and under what conditions. Protestant evangelicals uniformly reject such a notion as Sundberg has proposed.

2.7.5

Recent theories correlate canonical formation with strategic events in Israel's history. D. N. Freedman suggests cycles of two great building-blocks of canonical formation:

(a) Survival - the canon becomes a theological memoir. Following the Babylonian conquest books of the canon become the Bible of the exiles.

(b) Restoration - the canon becomes a message of hope. Proclaimed by the prophets the developing canon includes the theme of hope which galvanized reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem, the Temple and re-establishment of Torah teaching.

On this thesis, the traditional Protestant view is correct as to the pre-Christian era date for the closing of the OT canon. There is added the dynamic of apocalypse and hope and the impact of different needs and interests at various stages of Israel's history. It is a creative attempt to throw light on the dark ages during which canonical formation took place, about which we know very little.

2.7.6

Some evangelical scholars argue that the OT biblical canon was not completed until at least the end of the last decade of the first century of the Christian era (F. F. Bruce), or possibly later (Lee McDonald).

2.7.7

Others, including myself, believe that the OT canon was fixed before the beginning of the Christian era. This view is strongly supported by the Jewish scholar Sid Z. Leiman (*The Canonization of the Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence*. Hamden, Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, vol. 47, Feb. 1974, p.212). He concludes "that talmudic and midrashic evidence is entirely consistent with a second century B.C. dating for the closing of the biblical canon."

### **2.7.8 - The NT Canon**

2.7.8

Principles which guided NT canonical formation included: Authorship by an apostle or apostolic man. Knowledge of the book by the ancients. General utility and orthodoxy. Interaction among the leading ecclesiastical sees as to their holdings and scripture reading lists.

- 2.7.9 Acceptance of the NT books as inspired by God and authoritative follows naturally from the reverence in which the OT was held.
- 2.7.10 That what had been promised in the OT has now been fulfilled in Christ was the most important element in apostolic faith in the OT canon and among Christians during the period of the formation of the NT canon. This is what the NT records and proclaims. Christ is the final authority. He is the hinge of history and the focus of the NT writings. His words (the Gospels) were treasured and apostolic exposition of his teaching (the epistles) reinforced and interpreted more fully the essential Christian Gospel.
- 2.7.11 Nothing in the writings of the early church fathers undercuts the unique place and authority of the scriptures. The process of canonization was less the work of councils and synods than the work and expression of faith of congregations, scholars and church leaders. Councils simply confirmed what was already the fact and faith of the church: the unique, normative role of scripture as to that which is authentically Christian.

### **2.8.0 - Truth and Interpretation**

- 2.8.1 What happens in a genuine act of bible reading in contrast to the modishness of literary talk? One must discriminate between such reading and contemporary fads which drown meaning and common sense in a sea of semiotic or semantic quibble.
- 2.8.2 This is not to disparage the hard questions raised during the past four centuries as historical and literary skepticism undermined the religious instinct about the Bible's historical veracity and canonically sanctified coherence.
- 2.8.3 From the early church fathers to the Reformation interpretation of the Bible assumed the historical veracity and theological coherence of the scriptural canon. A wide range of hermeneutical practices flourished.
- 2.8.4 Irenaeus and Athanasius focused upon philological issues, and questions about exegetical method, and whether a particular method yielded valid conclusions.
- 2.8.5 Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Tertullian sought to untangle functions of symbolic language, particularly with a view to distilling the moral purpose and instructions of scripture. This method became a key factor in medieval interpretation, particularly among the Dominicans and in the work of Chaucer.
- 2.8.6 Luther, Erasmus and Calvin sought to re-establish the primacy of scripture exegesis and valid exposition as yardsticks to measure accumulated church traditions.
- 2.8.7 Milton politicized scripture interpretation. He and John Bunyan dramatized the meditative use of scripture with striking visual and verbal images.
- 2.8.8 Regardless of hermeneutical method, for fourteen hundred years the driving force behind interpretation of the Bible lay in the conviction that the canon of scripture is divinely inscribed.
- 2.8.9 Deconstruction of the divinely inscribed unity and historical veracity of the Bible began philologically in the seventeenth century by Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza. This undermined confidence in the Bible as a source of historical, verifiable truth and pulled the rug out from under Christian claims to unique, divinely inscribed revelation and biblical coherence. Flourishing natural sciences in the nineteenth century, notably geology, paleontology and the Darwinian hypothesis, further reinforced skepticism as to the historical reliability and verifiability of the Bible and its view of history.

- 2.8.10 Replies to the deconstruction of scripture within the literary and theological communities have been formulated largely within the Kantian metaphysical and epistemological framework, which is a call to discriminate between understanding (i.e., *wissen*, the sphere of verifiable, scientific knowledge) and faith (*glauben*, the sphere of belief). British and American theology and philosophy failed to respond adequately to the skeptical assault of the nineteenth century. Historical and empirical skepticism stood their ground.
- 2.8.11 Large segments of christian theology took haven in inwardness. The edifice of Christian faith must in future be built only upon self-evident transcendental values and moral truth, it was said. Writers such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Friedrich Schleiermacher moved the theological debate from outer, canonically sanctified religion to religious quest and to the inner spaces of human receptivity.
- 2.8.12 In the late twentieth century German historicism, French skepticism and Anglo-American empiricism and positivism have broken down, ironically, chiefly because the same deconstructionism theories which undermined biblical hermeneutics have called their principles, practices and results into question.
- 2.8.13 There is currently a revival of scholarly biblical interest. Upon what can such a revival be based? In the mainstream of Christianity - whether Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican or Protestant Evangelical - such interest has always shared the field with intensive scholarly activity and has been, not infrequently, the precursor of religious renewal. It is fatuous to claim that in light of the past four centuries of criticism renewed biblical interest can be based only upon irrationalism, literalism and fundamentalist approaches. Confessional Christianity has never so been based. Not even modern fundamentalism is totally literalist in approach because symbolism plays a crucial role in fundamentalist hermeneutical methods. Revival of biblical interest must get beyond fashions in semiotics and semantics which do meaning to death by a thousand qualifications. Meaning is to be apprehended by the reader from the text, not invented by the reader. We must discover afresh meaning as the result of genuine acts of Bible reading.
- 2.8.14 Christian faith is not, indeed cannot be, merely the expression of a private religious universe which is detached from or has no referential relationship to the objective world and its customary canons of credible assertion and verification.
- 2.8.15 None of its central tenets and major inferences can stand apart from its truth claims. These concern not merely self-description from within a solipsistic religious world which somehow magically reinvents itself in each generation; rather, they are instances of classes of statements which concern intelligibility, coherence and referential verification.
- 2.8.16 This applies to reading the Bible. The truth-conditions of biblical language and consequent faith entail more than the inspiration of devotion. They demand that the content of that faith meet external descriptive categories not unlike those of all knowledge which includes historical and other referential data. This means that Christian faith is more than fideism; more, that is, than the grammar of internally consistent beliefs; more than pleasing articulation of religious sensibilities.
- 2.8.17 They are the articulation of religious sensibilities whose credibility is correlated with the pronouncements of prophets and apostles about the identity and nature of God, the origin and nature of humanity, the present condition of humans as being in need of salvation, and the provision of that salvation through the person and work of Jesus Christ as the unique and indispensable historical revelation of God.

- 2.8.18 Christian theology comprises essential first-order symbols. Which of these among the many Christian beliefs are of critical importance and which are of secondary and derivative importance is the task of Christians and Christian theologians to state. But that statement cannot be made apart from the canons of truth and the canon of the scriptures which guard the essential Christian truths. The canon of truth and the canon of scripture are not unreferenced coherence, nor are they merely internally consistent grammar. They concern truth in the sense of pronouncements which purport to state that which is actually the case in any universe of discourse.
- 2.8.19 Today at the end of the twentieth century great opportunity lies before biblical interpreters. Four interlocking factors bear upon this immense task for which recent archaeological findings and historical study furnish challenging data:
- 2.8.20 (a) The text. The origin, provenance and authenticity of the texts of scripture is a primary, on-going challenge. New data which bear on this are immense and remain to be more fully digested as to their significance in refining the known texts of the canon.
- 2.8.21 (b) Context. The ways in which wider and better understanding of the social, religious and political context in which biblical people lived and worked impinge upon the uniqueness of the events and religious truths which Christians hold.
- 2.8.22 (c) Paradigm. The conceptual validity of OT and NT teaching and practices in light of their pre-scientific world view and alleged difficulties in our being able hermeneutically to stand in their shoes to distinguish that which is of enduring value and authority from that which is scientifically, culturally, ethically and religiously transient.
- 2.8.23 (d) Coherence. Fragmentation of study has called into question the possibility of any longer formulating any over-arching, divinely inscribed theological unity from the alleged diverse concepts of the Bible.
- 2.8.24 What elements are constitutive of the claimed unity between the OT and the NT as a canon of texts and of truth?

### **2.9.0 - The Text of Scripture**

- 2.9.1 The claim to historical revelation which includes a written, canonical form of that revelation in the nature of the case must confront questions posed by the existence of texts, their transmission and translation.
- 2.9.2 For the most part, the Bible of the first Christians was the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT commonly identified as the LXX) . However, significant variations of LXX-type texts occur in the NT so that at present it is not possible to state with certainty which OT text or variant is being used in many NT citations.
- 2.9.3 Example: The differences between the Massoretic text of *Amos* 5:25-27 and the text quoted by Stephen at his martyrdom in *Acts* 7:42-43 are considerable. Amos places Israel's idolatry as far back as the Assyrian invasion and envisions deportation beyond Damascus. Conversely, Stephen has in mind the Babylonian captivity. F. F. Bruce suggests that Stephen's citation would be natural for a Jerusalemite and that allowance must be given for a slip of memory during an impassioned speech moments before his martyrdom. If he had had books to hand in a quiet study setting might he have quoted it differently? Is Professor Bruce's apology convincing? Richard Longenecker suggests the possibility of testimonia collections which were freely circulated and likely emendation by an amanuensis in the copying of such testimonia.

2.9.4 We simply do not know why the texts diverge. All we know is that most of the OT quotations in the NT are dominantly LXX in form, with a few parallels to the biblical texts in the Qumran documents. This neither supports nor impinges upon authenticity. It means only that our knowledge is incomplete and that much more work needs to be done as to the facts in any particular case. A distinction needs to be made between situations where contradictory data are deemed to be complete and situations in regard to which much more data are likely to come to hand.

2.9.5 Historical data concerning the biblical texts are vast -- far greater than for any of the classical Greek texts. One encounters little skepticism among scholars of Greek as to the authenticity of the texts of the dialogues of Plato or the texts of Aristotle. The biblical texts command scholarly respect. Christians must welcome all new data and carefully sift opinion as to its significance for the on-going task of more fully understanding NT times.

### **2.10.0 - The Bible As Literature**

2.10.1 Words have uses not meanings. The unit of understanding is the sentence in its context, not individual terms.

2.10.2 Much of the Bible can be read and understood just like other literature. Biblical writers employ literary genre common to their language, in ways common to the literary traditions of their culture. Some of the Bible is narrative prose, some is poetry of several kinds or dramatic verse, some of the writing is lucidly symbolic and some is profoundly and confusingly symbolic.

2.10.3 While the genre employed in Scripture are in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, most are readily translatable into English and other languages, though this is at least once removed from the original and it must be recognized that all translation entails interpretation. Knowledge of at least the basic genre of one's own language, and some awareness of the genre of the biblical languages, is needed for even a modest degree of authentic biblical interpretation. Nevertheless, much of biblical interpretation is common sense interpretation which is open to the non-specialist.

2.10.4 One must respect authorial intent. Within the scriptures themselves are embedded interpretations of events and texts which may serve as guides to authentic interpretation of the Bible and warranted assertability as to the implications of its message.

2.10.5 Detailed knowledge of philology and hermeneutics native to ancient cultures is important for comprehensive knowledge of some texts but not necessarily so for valid comprehension of most texts.

2.10.6 For example: The use of midrashic interpretation of OT texts in the NT (rabbinic commentary) which either in halachic fashion probes for deeper meaning of the law or in haggadic fashion for homiletical and devotional meaning; or pesher interpretation, (rabbinic methods which claim to unfold mystery allegedly hinted at in the text): "this means...", enlarges our knowledge of the methods employed by biblical writers. Nevertheless, for example, lack of such knowledge does not prevent most lay students of the Bible from having a clear grasp of the difference in Paul's writings between the moral law and the ceremonial law and what Paul means by justification by faith, not by works of the law.

2.10.7 The term literal interpretation is now commonly used pejoratively. It ought to be resurrected to its true sense, namely, respect for authorial intent and respect for the text grammatically.

- 2.10.8           The following is a sensible hermeneutical rule written by S. T. Coleridge (*Aids to Reflection*), an English jurist of another generation:
- I have been long impressed with the wisdom of the rule, now, I believe, universally adopted, at least in Courts of law, that, in construing all written instruments, the grammatical and ordinary sense of the words is to be adhered to, unless that would lead to some absurdity, or some repugnance, or inconsistency with the rest of the instrument, in which case the grammatical and ordinary sense of the words may be modified, so as to avoid that absurdity and inconsistency, but no further.*
- 2.10.9           A theological parallel is the rule of David L. Cooper, the evangelical Hebraist who lived in the first half of the twentieth century:
- When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.*
- 2.10.10          Many forms of literary genre are employed in the scriptures. The following are the most common:
- 2.10.11          **(a) Literal Statement.** This is verbatim record or accurate statement of something that was said or done. Every part of the sentence is to be understood in its direct sense. Forms of this genre include: Verbatim record of what was said, such as the Law of Moses or the sayings of Jesus. Accurate summary or compressed fact, though parallel accounts will vary, such as accounts of the life of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, The Sermon on the Mount (which in part may be a collection of sayings) or Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Detail is compressed or accounts are assembled in the interests of highlighting a main event or teaching.
- 2.10.12          Frequently a statement is made about a matter of fact which is accompanied by interpretation of the event. For example, the Fall of Jerusalem being divine judgment, or that Christ died for our sins.
- 2.10.13          **(b) Satire.** There is not a little satire and biting humor in the Bible. Examples include the folly of idols (*Isaiah 44*), Elijah's regaling of the prophets of Baal (*1 Kings 18:20--40*), Jesus on the Pharisees reading the sky for approaching weather but failing to discern signs of the times or obvious spiritual principles (*Luke 12:54-56*), Paul on glossalalia (*1 Corinthians 12:23*).
- 2.10.14          **(c) Analogy.** This states a resemblance of relations or attributes which triggers apprehension of some truth. Resemblance, not identity, is used to draw out theological truth or a moral lesson. The simplest form of analogy in the Bible is simile, in which one thing is compared to another for purposes of instruction. Parables function similarly. For example, the word of God is like a mirror (*James 1:23*) and the voice of the Lord is like thunder (*Psalms 18:13*).
- 2.10.15          **(d) Anagogy.** This is a form of analogy in which the mind is elevated to perceive a high spiritual or theological truth by means of comparison. It is often used by mystery cults. The following is a biblical example: God rested from his work of creation on the seventh day, which triggers the concept of final salvation as the entering upon rest by God's people (*Hebrews 3:9*).
- 2.10.16          What saves the interpreter from flights of improbable fancy in interpreting the scriptures? For example: Can deep spiritual truths be elicited by meditating upon the significance of the materials and colors of the Tabernacle in the wilderness? Does the scarlet cord set out by Rahab at Jericho to spare her from destruction really signify the

blood of Christ as our means of salvation (*Joshua* 1:18)? Christians of all traditions have been pulled back from symbolic excess chiefly by paying attention to interpretive methods of the biblical writers as norming patterns.

- 2.10.17 (e) **Metaphor.** Understanding the symbolic use of language, of which metaphor is the chief mode employed in the Scriptures, is critical to authentic biblical interpretation. The lines between metaphor and other symbolic uses are not easy to draw.
- 2.10.18 A parable is a fictitious narrative about a common occurrence which is used to make a spiritual or moral point. The parable of the Good Samaritan answers the question, "Who is my neighbor?" (*Luke* 10:29).
- 2.10.19 Allegory is a description of one subject under the guise of some other subject of aptly suggestive resemblance in order to make a spiritual or moral point: The allegory of the trees (*Judges* 9:7-15). John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory of the Christian's pilgrimage which parallels the allegory of the Christian pilgrimage many generations of biblical readers have fashioned for purpose of spiritual instruction based upon the account of the wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel.
- 2.10.20 Type is the use of a person, object or event which is thought to represent a more permanent reality or greater spiritual or moral truth. In the book of Hebrews the oft-repeated sacrifices of the OT are seen to be a foreshadowing of the final, once-for-all sacrifice of Christ (*Hebrews* 9:23-28) and Melchizedek, whose birth and death are not recorded, in contrast to the Aaronic priests, is a type of Christ whose priestly ministry is efficacious for all time because he has neither beginning of days nor ending of life (*Hebrews* 7:17, 23-25).
- 2.10.21 Aristotle defined metaphor as "the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus," (*Poetics* 1457:7-8). Metaphor is the most widely used literary device in the Bible. Such symbolic reference is not intended to suggest that what is spoken of is myth or simply story-line; rather, that what is stated metaphorically aptly states the truth of the matter: "God is light," (*1 John* 1:5; "The Lord is my shepherd," *Psalms* 23:1; "a mighty fortress is our God," (a poetic version of *Psalms* 46:1, 7).
- 2.10.22 More is entailed in understanding metaphor than general agreement that one must understand the literal meaning of the terms employed and that comparison between two things is involved.
- 2.10.23 The best uses of theological metaphor are identical to its best scientific uses: the truth or falsity of metaphorical utterances is not to be thought of itself as being merely and only metaphor; that is, non-referential, autonomous meaning. Rather, in theology as in science metaphor is an aid to discovery and exposition of true states of affairs.
- 2.10.24 The beauty of metaphor is that when literal description fails - as in the case of the Incarnation - metaphor succeeds admirably by identifying Christ as the Logos. Logos meant a whole range of things in ancient philosophy and religion, but chiefly the idea of a divine element which is rationally discernible in the world. Probably most Stoics could have said, "In the beginning was the Word," but no Stoic could have said, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Hence theological metaphor is the short way home to concrete understanding of reality. Theological metaphor is not merely a language game.
- 2.10.25 Metaphor is not a stand-in for myth. Metaphor states identity and is a truth-checker. To state that Jesus Christ is the Logos made flesh is a statement of his ontological uniqueness. It is a statement of the personal incarnation of God. To see the incarnation as metaphor, as John Hick has recently advocated (*The Metaphor of God Incarnate*, 1995),

does not furnish a door of escape from metaphysical questions. In his attempt to move the debate beyond his merely attacking the concept of incarnation as myth, Hick argues that incarnation in the case of Christ is better thought of as metaphor signifying the exemplary instance of the relationship between the divine initiative and human response. This raises no less difficult questions as to the nature of the God to whom we respond and the nature of that relationship, than questions orthodox Christians confront of how God and man can be joined in one person.

2.10.26 Metaphor works by empathy to cut across racial, linguistic and cultural lines in order to achieve universality. We are all drawn into the figure. We identify with it because we share a common humanity. Today, gender-specific and ethnic-specific and sex-orientation specific literature tend to divide humanity and there is a paucity of universalizing metaphor in such writing.

2.10.27 Scientific metaphor universalizes understanding of a scientifically dependable world. What happens here under given conditions will happen there under the same conditions. There are not Russian physics, chemistry, biology, or American ones, only the use of metaphor to disclose and expound the nature of the world common to us all as one world for common understanding.

2.10.28 Theological metaphor universalizes issues in relation to our common humanity. Through the use of metaphors the Bible achieves universality. Biblical metaphors cut across narrowly focused attitudes to embrace the world without reference to language, color or creed. The story of the Prodigal Son touches us all (*Luke 15*).

### **2.11.0 - Modes of Divine Revelatory Initiative**

2.11.1 In the Bible the manner in which God is said to have spoken varies greatly. Some of the modes are characteristic of ordinary inter-personal communication and interpretation of events. Other of the modes cause discomfort to many modern Christians. What is the relationship of these modes to the concept of the canon and the place of both in the life of the church?

2.11.2 God has spoken personally, through nature, through conscience and through history. Included are such diverse modes as the following: God appeared to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses, personally, or in or alongside physical objects. He spoke by means of dreams, visions, and in deep sleep. He spoke through angels and other creatures. He spoke through the writings of the prophets, the poetry of the Psalms, and through wisdom literature. Some schools of the prophets such as Samuel's sought the divine word through ecstasy. Most prophets appear to have received God's Word in the ordinary course of living and of observing human behavior and the nations around them. Events and circumstances of life become occasions of God's presence and guidance, and were often seen to be freighted with a divine message. Lots were cast in both OT and NT. These were not acts of divination. They appear to detach human influence from the outcome so as to leave the fortuitous result wholly within the providence of God (Proverbs 16:33). The incarnation is God's self-disclosure. It is declared to be final and climactic so far as knowledge of the nature and purposes of God are concerned.

2.11.3 The Bible is a record of communication which is claimed to be from God, a witness to the truth of that claim, a recounting of experiences of God, and an account of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and apostolic interpretation of the significance of his life. God is experienced as being personal from the start and the personal self-disclosure of God in Christ coheres with that conviction and teaching. The transcendent God was present and speaking in finite situations. Jesus Christ is God incarnate, present personally in our finite situation as Savior. The Bible's appeal is rooted in the fundamental premise that ultimate reality is of the nature of persons and personal life and that revelation takes

place on God's initiative, in history, in such manner as that at times his speaking is personally direct and at other times his speaking embraces human discovery and insight.

2.11.4 The functions of speech in the Bible cohere with the biblical view of human nature. Human beings are spiritual creatures. Speech is not simply a reflex mechanism. It is more than subliminal stimulus which triggers satisfaction of need. Speech is the indispensable bridge between persons. Personal encounter is impossible unless a word is spoken. The mind, spirit or character of the person sitting next to me in an airplane are opaque to me; whereas, if I pick up the phone in the airplane seat and dial my office, speech enables me to get into another's mind and he into mine supraliminally. This is the function of the Word of God and of Christ the incarnate Word. Through observation of nature we may be able at times correctly to infer truths about the power and intelligence of a creator, but never about his character. In interpersonal relations the words are not merely analogical. They convey reality because only they make non-sensory data accessible and, as well, they can make them accessible as matters of public fact. How this word from God came, or may still come, is fundamentally not known to us, except for the "still small voice" of the prophet Elijah's encounter with God.

2.11.5 In what sense are the various modalities of biblical revelation to be taken seriously? Are they merely the ramblings of ancient mythologies?

2.11.6 The biblical canon is the winnowing and controlling element in the formation of authentic Christian understanding. Since the time of Christ and the apostles there has been a depletion of revelatory situations. All the major Christian confessions state or assume this to be true. Claims to new revelation have been steadfastly resisted by practically all churches in Christendom. This does not indicate rejection by Christians of the divine sovereignty to speak again "in many and various ways," (Hebrews 1:1); rather, depletion is taken to confirm that God has spoken once and for all through the prophets, in and by Jesus Christ and through the apostolic testimony. Depletion is due to fulfillment of disclosure. There is no biblical mandate nor formulae given for Christians to institutionalize or to ritualize revelatory situations as many non-Christian religions do. This is why the skepticism with which all branches of Christendom view claims to non-biblical special revelation, recurring claims to visions of Mary or Christ, claims to miracle working, or claims to one's being a channel for yet new words from God is so pervasive. Such skepticism is not a denial of the possibility of a new divine initiative under any number of different modes. It is rooted in the conviction that if God has spoken "in these last times" in Christ then he has said what he wanted to say and that the next move will be his to inaugurate the Kingdom of Christ. Meanwhile, the task of Christians is to preach the Gospel, to nurture people in the Christian way, to succor the needy, to live righteously, but not to look for yet new revelation and new signs. Accounts of unusual spiritual events, claims to receiving new divine disclosures or prophetic pronouncements, and claims for powers to perform miracles should not be treated with kid gloves as is now commonly the case within many Christian denominations. They should be accorded skeptical respect and should be brought under careful scrutiny.

2.11.7 In the scriptures five revelational modalities appear to be common:

2.11.8 (a) Personal encounter. This is direct, personal communication by means of vision, dream or personal speaking, as in the case of Abraham or the Law-giving to Moses.

2.11.9 (b) Insight. This entails a reading of the course of history and of events in life as indicators of God's intervention, reassurance, guidance, deliverance or judgment. Such insights make up much of the biblical record. Examples: That the rising confluence of nations would end up as divine judgment against Israel as Amos prophesied, or against Judah as Jeremiah prophesied. Paul's "we thus judge" (KJV) or "brings us to this conclusion" (Berkeley Version) in *2 Corinthians* 5:14 as insight into the meaning of Christ's atoning death; or his insight into the new reality of the church which includes

Gentiles and breaks down the ethnic wall of division between Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 3:4).

- 2.11.10 (c) Wonder. These are occasions during worship and prayer when the presence of God is sensed as humbling, judging and restoring. The *Psalms* are a record of the soul's communion with God. They detail occasions of the experience of God and the manner of true communion with him.
- 2.11.11 (d) Teaching. Accumulated wisdom of OT and NT encounters with God is consolidated in the moral instruction of the canon, such as the Proverbs, the teaching of Jesus and the practical sections of Paul's epistles. These are didactic extensions of the experience of God. They communicate codes of behavior which reflect the righteousness and grace of God as objective moral standards.
- 2.11.12 (e) Incarnation. Jesus Christ is God incarnate. He personally discloses who God is, what God is like, and God's purposes. What the OT foreshadowed is now fulfilled. His life, teaching, death and resurrection mark the critical turning point of history. He is the hinge of history. He will yet return to establish his kingdom.
- 2.11.13 As varied as are the modalities of divine disclosure, they all converge upon messianic promise and fulfillment.

#### 2.12.0 - Biblical Theological Coherence

- 2.12.1 H. E. W. Turner distills key principles of the post-apostolic period which shape patristic understanding of biblical theological coherence (*The Pattern of Truth*, 1954). They are Christological in nature. First, the paedagogos concept sees the OT as our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (*Galatians* 3:23). Through several economies the OT prepares us for the fuller realities of Christ by conserving the messianic theme which pervades it. Second, the OT prefigures Christ's fuller realities. This is especially true of sacrifice, notably the Day of Atonement and *Isaiah* 53 which foreshadow the atoning work of Christ (*Hebrews* 9, *Mark* 10:45). These concepts, preparation, prefiguration and fulfillment, lie side by side at the root of patristic interpretation of scripture.
- 2.12.2 There follow summaries of some perspectives on biblical theological coherence.
- 2.12.3 (a) **R. V. G. Tasker** (*The OT In The NT*, 1946)
- Tasker shows how the OT overshadows the life of Jesus at every strategic point, in his teaching and in his use of the OT in disputes with opponents. The evangelists present Christ against the backdrop of the OT.
- 2.12.4 Matthew employs the fulfillment formula ten times (...come to pass that it might be fulfilled...). Christ is the Greater Moses and David's Greater Son.
- 2.12.5 In the nativity narrative Luke focuses upon the realization of Israel's hope. Christ is King of Israel. He honors the law. He is the great prophet. He is the deliverer. He inaugurates a new age of Spirit-bearing humanity which, in the book of Acts, includes Christians as recipients of the same Spirit.
- 2.12.6 The validity of the OT law is critical in Paul's development of Christ's fulfillment of it and of his bearing its burden of judgment for sin on the cross.
- 2.12.7 The extensive development of the foreshadowing theme in *Hebrews* is built upon a sacramental view of scripture. Christ's priesthood and sacrifice are both the fulfillment of and are superior to the sacrifices of the OT, which foreshadow his final sacrifice.

- 2.12.8 Peter speaks of Christians as the New Israel of God and declares that the OT conserved the sure word of prophecy which anticipated the NT realities.
- 2.12.9 James employs the mirror simile to illustrate the moral authority of the OT for scrutiny of the Christian life.
- 2.12.10 The "best is yet to be" of the Book of Revelation is presented as fulfillment of OT promises.
- 2.12.11 (b) **B. F. C. Atkinson** (*The Christian's Use of the OT*, 1952)
- 2.12.12 Atkinson develops themes from the OT which are the foundation for the Gospel, such as: The OT teaching about God as loving creator. The moral responsibility of human beings. The Principles of covenant relationship and salvation. Patterns of worship and devotion. The messianic hope. Foreshadowings of Christ's sacrifice in the ceremonial law.

2.12.13 (c) **Paul and Elizabeth Achtemeier** (*The OT Roots of Our Faith*, 1962)

They see biblical coherence under two rubrics: eschatologically, as promise and fulfillment; and existentially, as humanity under God, viewed theomorphically. All of the major themes are components of these, including: Memory and worship. The covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Transgression and restoration. Divine intervention in history as acts of judgment and grace. The Messiah and the concept of mediation. Earthly and heavenly kingship. The old Israel and the new. The new humanity in Christ and the resurrection.

2.12.14 (d) **F. F. Bruce** (*The NT Development of OT Themes*, 1968)

Professor Bruce invites readers to stand back and note recurring key feature images which transfer from the OT to the NT: The paradise motif (like John Milton's *Paradise Lost*). The transient earthly city (kingdom) in contrast to the heavenly. The differing priesthoods of Aaron and Melchizedek outlined in Hebrews. The bread of life and water of life themes.

2.12.15 He cites the work of N. W. Porteous on the cohering themes of sovereignty, fatherhood, election, the Servant of Yahweh and the Son of Man. As well, he draws attention to S. H. Hooke's discussion of a three-level interpretation of the Exodus: as historical event; as a pattern of God's encounter with, and leading of, his people; and as the symbol of deliverance which Christ accomplishes.

2.12.16 Bruce summarizes biblical theological coherence under the following key-feature concepts: the Rule of God, the Victory of God, the People of God, the Son of David, the Servant Messiah, the Shepherd King.

2.12.17 (e) **H. M. Shires** (*Finding the OT in the New*, 1974)

Shires discusses the continuing authority of the OT for Jesus and that it is Christ himself who inaugurates the Christological interpretation which later permeates the NT. Apostolic preaching and teaching conserve and reinforce Christ's use of the OT as foreshadowing his own life and work. Early Christians believed that the OT was God's written word and that it was therefore uniquely authoritative. However, the manner of its use also reflects their conviction that it was preparatory and predictive of its own fulfillment in Christ. Use of the OT fits into the Christian perspective as a bright light upon the meaning of history and on the human condition.

2.12.18 The foregoing sampling of perspectives on the theological coherence of the Bible illustrates the critical function of the preparation and prefiguration themes in NT times. It remains to summarize from my own perspective key feature concepts which I believe are axioms of biblical theological coherence.

## 2.13.0 - Formulating an Hermeneutic

### 2.13.1 1. Foundational Premises

The following comprise axioms of the Christian biblical hermeneutic upon which the whole edifice of Christian theology is built:

2.13.2 (a) One God

That there is only one personal, true and living God, the creator and sustainer of the world, and that the ultimate nature of reality is that of persons and personal relations. There is nothing higher.

- 2.13.3 (b) One World  
That the world is real, not the creation of my fancy, and that it is scientifically dependable as God's creation. Ben Johnson's dismissal of solipsism by vigorously kicking a rock is apt, even though it needs reinforcement by rational argument.
- 2.13.4 (c) One History  
That the world came into being by God's act of creation, that the history of the world is linear and teleological and that it moves toward fulfillment of a divinely purposed goal.
- 2.13.5 (d) One Morality  
That good and evil are objective realities not mere social conventions, that their norm is the righteousness of God, and that human beings are morally responsible to God.
- 2.13.6 **2. The Concept of Lordship**  
  
The Bible declares the sovereignty of God and his purposes in history which are elaborated in the preparation and fulfillment themes. The biblical world-view is teleological in nature.
- 2.13.7 **3. The Concept of Redemption**  
  
Sacrifice, atonement and the Suffering Servant themes tie together the whole range of redemption images. These say that ultimately sin, release from guilt, the removal of judgment and human reconciliation to God can occur only on a moral footing which God freely provides by means of Christ's death and resurrection.
- 2.13.8 **4. The Concept of a New Humanity**  
  
A key linking theme of the Bible, which answers to human sinfulness, is the promise of redemption. The Gospel proclaims the good news that God has provided salvation through Jesus Christ's redeeming work upon repentance from sin and faith in him. Sinners may become new creatures in Christ, endowed with Christ's Spirit. New life is a call to righteousness, to a life that is pleasing to God.
- 2.13.9 **5. The Concept of a New Society**  
  
Under the righteousness of God the people of God comprise a new humanity of which the church is both the microcosm and promise of the coming kingdom. Fellowship in Christ breaks down walls which divide people. The community of faith is the sign of the age to come. The Christian social ideal is tempered morally by the transcendent norm of God's righteousness and by recognition of human proneness to sin. Thus for Christians one of the foundation stones of any earthly society is the doctrine of original sin which recognizes human proneness to corruption and abuse of power and therefore seeks to retain the right to remove power from wrong doers and to eject them from office, whether in the secular or in the religious realm. There is no right or succession to authority which is not morally qualified.
- 2.13.10 **6. The Concept of the Final Kingdom**  
  
The promise of Christ's return to establish his kingdom creates hope and comprises the basis of a theodicy. Christians look for the resurrection, the restoration of the natural order, the final judgment of evil and evil doers, the eradication of evil, and eternal life in God's presence as coworkers.



# KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Samuel J. Mikolaski

## OUTLINE

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### 3.0.0 **Theology and Religious Pluralism**

3.0.1 Contemporary attitudes to the concept God in Philosophy, Theology and Religion resemble a smorgasbord or, better still, a modern shopping mall. Enter the banquet hall. Savor the delights diligently prepared and beautifully arranged to suit most any taste. Daintily pick up a tid-bit here, a morsel there; spoon out this or that; carve what your heart desires, rare, medium or well-done.

3.0.2 Or, consider the analogy of a mall. Here is planet earth, stores which house humanity's religious wares. Window-shop. Collect samples. Buy a bit here and a bit there. Then treat yourself to some cappuccino while you sit at a lovely fountain (artificial, of course) to ponder how you are going to take the universe apart and put it back together again. Set examination question: "Describe the universe briefly, and give two or three good examples."

3.0.3 Does not social reality today mandate religious pluralism? Modern sensibilities hold that since society is not homogeneous, a pluralist view of religion answers more adequately to the way the world actually is. Should not theology reflect society more than it does?

3.0.4 In light of present attitudes, how should Christians handle what Emil Brunner called "the offense of particularity;" that God spoke at certain times, to certain individuals, in certain ways? Has any claim by Christianity to authentic uniqueness totally evaporated, as John Hick says?

3.0.5 In our time, at no other point are these issues joined more sharply than on what the concept God means. Does God have Being, or is he pure Being? What does Being signify? Is the term God the beginning of a quest to add meaning to life? Is it a concept which forces abstraction and conjecture, followed by imaginative "pasting on" of significance to the disparate experiences of life? Is the concept God a metaphor for self-understanding?

3.0.6 Or, does theology by means of revelation give information about God? Does the concept God derive from the self-disclosure of one who has so named himself? Does the concept God derive from a briefing, from tidings, which fill the term with concrete meaning?

3.1.0 **Theistic Belief**

3.1.1 There are two important foci in claims to the knowledge of God: to what extent is such knowledge based upon rational insight derived from observation of the order of the universe; and, to what extent is it a reporting of direct experience of God? In each case there is the potential for grievous error and there are crucial questions involved on how to distinguish truth from error or falsehood. In the first case theism may end up as a largely hair-splitting logical exercise characterized by little religious feeling or commitment. In the second case - that of "God speaking to me now" - it is difficult to see how one can arbitrate among tastes. Can there be any disputing of religious tastes? Is religion a solipsistic universe?

Can a balance be found between these, or should one even be sought? Within confessional Christianity's claim to an historical revelation these issues are brought into sharp focus and are often held in difficult balance and uneasy tension. For an insightful discussion of these questions, note the work of P. T. Forsyth, *Faith, Freedom and the Future* (1907) in which he discusses this tension, the balance struck within evangelical Protestantism and its strategic effects in the pursuit of religious and political liberty in the West.

3.1.2 An axiom of biblical teaching is that "the heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork," (Psalm 19:1, RSV). Though wonderfully insightful, this statement does not ratify natural theology as the wellspring of specific truths about the nature of God. It reminds us that how we look at the world will determine conclusions as to its possible origin and functioning, and that these may well require correction. Generalized theistic belief is not the cornerstone of Christian faith, though observation and conjecture may tend to confirm important aspects of faith. Like mortar, they may reinforce a beautifully fitted stone structure. Theistic argument can be an enormously diverting pastime. Experience shows, however, that some conclusions of theistic speculation are utterly fantastic, such as the modern aphorism that "I am God." Alternatively, it is not particularly religiously inspiring to be told that God is one, albeit crucially important, force within nature. The problem with natural theology is not that sometimes true conclusions might be reached but that, more often, wrong ones are. That is the history of idolatry. The same is true of claims to the direct experience of God.

3.1.3 The Bible is a compilation of truths drawn from both rational insight and personal experience. However, the historical form and content of this revelation does not mandate repetition of the total process or content of the revelation in the experience of every individual person. Aspects of the biblical narrative reflect the human religious quest, but its key feature is that of disclosure - God's self-disclosure which, though specific to those individuals, is also given to be normative for us. Truths recorded by prophets and apostles or by others from their testimony as to the origin of the universe and its dependence upon God and authentic experience of God are the core of the biblical message and they comprise the measure of authentic Christian religious experience. There will always be no end of personal and church struggles over questions of immediacy. At the end of the day, criteria for judging the truth of the matter will not be based solely upon "God speaking to me now" but "I believe God has spoken once for all historically and I must measure and interpret my own religious experiences in light of that historical (biblical) revelation."

3.1.4 For Christians, specific theistic knowledge is biblically based. It comprises the truth that God is one, personal and self-revealed. He is the God and Father of Jesus Christ. Only upon a fully Trinitarian base of understanding of the nature of the one true

and living God, attested to by the biblical prophets and apostles, are key elements of the Christian Gospel comprehensible. Speculation can lead to forms of idolatrous incarnation belief - that God is somehow embedded in the world, especially sentient life. Among the apostles and the first Christians, belief that Jesus Christ is indeed uniquely the incarnate Son of God, and that he only is truly the Son of God, forced revision of received ideas about the nature of God and continues to be the norm of Christian theistic understanding. This claim to an historically given norm and to particularity is deeply offensive to the modern mind.

3.1.5 Most of the Bible does not consist of theistic argument. Rather, it is narrative about objective historical events and reporting of the subjective experiences of God by people, often said to be God's chosen instruments, over many generations. That these historical events and subjective experiences entailed interpretation by the persons in question is, for me, a foregone conclusion. At issue is whether the interpretations they give are the truth of the matter. That they are is the heart of the biblical claim to both credibility and canonicity. That the reporting and interpretation of the historical situations is deemed to be credible augments credibility of those sections that are declared to be direct communications from God such as the Ten Commandments, judgment pronouncements, calls for repentance, moral instruction and Messianic promise.

3.1.6 This is a claim which may be construed to be abrasive to religious sensibilities. If Abraham's experience of God was authentic and is now deemed to be normative, why should mine not also be deemed canonical? The answer is uncompromising: that is the nature of a revelation given in written form which has in view an historical purpose. God's speaking aimed at specific historical events and ends, not merely personal religious encounter. God's speaking intended to disclose an unfolding, historical purpose. That speaking prefigured Christ the Redeemer and prepared the way for him. Once fulfilled in Christ, that speaking is final.

### 3.2.0 **Theistic Argument**

3.2.1 In contemporary thought the traditional arguments for the existence of God are not thought to reflect an innate idea any more than any other idea is innate. They are regarded as reflecting a built-in capacity for such a concept, much like the capacity for language, along with, some think, an inclination *a priori* to think such a thought as that God exists. Late medieval philosophers developed the arguments into a coherent framework which to many appeared to furnish a Natural Theology which could parallel Christian concepts derived by special revelation.

3.2.2 **Thomas Aquinas** (1225-1274) may be regarded as a key figure in medieval theistic argument formulation. Human rationality straddles two worlds, he says, the external material world, and an inner world which in systematic fashion answers to a transcendental, spiritual world. The rational arguments for the existence of God show the capacity of human beings to acquire true knowledge, in contrast to the Augustinian synthesis which, because of the debilitating effects of sin, cast doubt on human capacity to adequately grasp truth. From this there developed the possibility of a two-track theology: that the revelation of God in nature could be seen to parallel much of that which appeared to be the province of special revelation. Aquinas' formulation consists of five arguments (the Five Ways of his *Summa Theologica*, Book I)

3.2.3 First, the argument from motion, which is based on Aristotle's Prime Mover concept, namely, that there must have been an initial cause to the universe. This is to say that a transcendent First Cause, or Being, originated everything that exists.

3.2.4 Second, the argument from efficient causality. By this, apparently unlike Aristotle, he did not posit the first cause merely as one in a series to blunt the apparent irrationality of an infinite regress. And he meant more than Hume's later definition of

cause as merely the habit of seeing conjunctions in which it appears that one thing causes another. Aquinas means an efficient First cause: one that stands above the series, is not merely the first in a series and is itself uncaused.

3.2.5 Third, the argument from contingency. This extends the argument from cause. Nothing could just happen to be, spontaneously, for nothing can come from nothing. The mere fact of existing finite things requires that there be some necessary being which transcends their contingency.

3.2.6 Fourth, the argument from degrees of being. This argument harkens back to the Parmenidean concept of Being according to which existing things participate in Being to a greater or less degree. There exists beyond finite reality a perfect reality in which all finite things participate at a higher or lower level.

3.2.7 Fifth, the argument from design. While for us the teleological argument is premised on perceptions of purpose in nature, for Aquinas the concept of purpose is inherent. Everything must have a purpose, a purpose which is given by God.

3.2.8 At least the first three of the foregoing arguments are versions of the cosmological argument; nevertheless, it may fairly be put that the formulations reflect a powerful deductive impulse. There appears to be an *a priori* religious component to them, not unlike Anselm's Ontological Argument. With the development of scientific methodology there was less inclination to employ theistic argument merely in formal logic terms. From the standpoint of science, modern forms of the arguments concentrate chiefly on the Cosmological and Teleological arguments, with the addition of moral categories, while from a religious standpoint recent theological statement focuses upon the immediate intuition of absolute being.

3.2.9 It remains to update recent attention to the theistic arguments. The shift from medieval deductive method to the modern scientific inductive approach is evident from the ways in which post-medieval forms of the arguments are framed. This trend is highlighted by inclusion of the anthropic principle, usually called the moral argument for the existence of God.

3.2.10 First, the **Cosmological Argument**. In contemporary literature this derives from the instinct that the universe is not the ground of its own existence, but is the product of a higher power. Its simplest, syllogistic form is that (a) every event must have a cause; (b) the universe is an event; (c) therefore, the universe has a cause. Forms of this applied to theism are many: the Unmoved Mover concept; the changeable rooted in the unchangeable; a first, efficient cause; a necessary entity as the author of contingent entities; the absolute deduced from the relative, as Hegel attempted; created good pointing to a supreme good; relative power pointing to supreme power; lower levels of being pointing to higher and, finally, the highest level of being.

Such argument does not answer why a first cause is itself uncaused, or whether that cause is personal or impersonal. Modern objections are that there need be no first cause because the universe is eternal, or that universes come into existence and go out of existence spontaneously. Such argument appears to burke explanation. That the universe is not self-sufficient but depends upon something other than and beyond itself is an instinct favorably dealt with in the Bible. For example, note Isaiah 1:3; 40:26; Romans 1:19-20; Acts 14:17, Hebrews 3:4.

3.2.11 Second, the **Teleological Argument**. Following Anaxagoras and Aristotle, this argument posits that from the evidence of rationality in the universe one must conclude that an intelligent cause is its author. With the rise of the Darwinian hypothesis the principle of purpose for many was displaced by the principles of natural adaptation and chance variations. The reply of others is that the formation of the universe as we know it

on the basis of pure chance stretches credulity. They argue for either an inherent principle of rationality or that the universe is of such and such a kind that it moves toward the production of order, including sentient beings which have minds. Critics respond that rationality and purpose may well be in the eye of the beholder, and that the argument moves not *from* design but *to* design. Nor does the argument tell us whether the intelligent first cause is purely immanent or transcendent, finite or infinite, personal or impersonal.

3.2.12 Third, the **Moral Argument**. Based upon the moral nature of human beings and the ethical demands of a moral order, many argue that this points to a supreme moral law-giver. Without God there is no moral foundation, the argument goes, not unlike Plato's attack upon moral relativism by affirming the reality of transcendental Good. Modern reduction of morality to relative social mores has seriously undermined this argument in the public mind. Current reaction to such undermining is now an important factor in American life in the new quest for values. The concept of an objective moral standard based upon and answering to the righteousness of God is a key factor in biblical theology (examples are *Amos* 5:14-15 and *Romans* 1-2).

3.2.13 Fourth, the **Ontological Argument**. The ontological argument is uniquely Anselm's (1033-1109), though variants of it have been proposed from medieval times to the present; for example, the recent formulation by Charles Hartshorne. I take the view that Anselm develops his case from within the revelational context of Christian faith, not as an attempt by sheer logic to convince the unbeliever. It is, he says, faith seeking understanding.

3.2.14 In the *Monologium* Anselm developed *a posteriori* arguments, much like the later Five Ways of Aquinas, especially the first three. These moved from the sense world to the spiritual world as inferences from the finite to the infinite. But in the *Proslogium* he attempts (challenged by his student monks at the Abbey of Le Bec) to frame an *a priori* argument in which by one fell swoop the necessity of God's existence becomes inescapably self-evident, i.e., that one cannot escape the reality of God. The argument follows:

3.2.15 *Major Premise:* God is a being "that than which a greater cannot be conceived."  
(*Aliquid quo nihil majus cogitari potest*)  
*Minor Premise:* But to exist in actuality (*in re*) is greater than to exist in thought (*in intellectu*).  
*Conclusion:* Therefore there must exist "that than which a greater cannot be conceived" both in thought and actuality. (*Existit ergo procul dubio aliquid quo majus cogitari non valet, et in intellectu et in re.*)

3.2.16 Objections came quickly, first from the monk Gaunilo who argued that widespread unbelief which appears to sincerely deny the existence of God undercuts the argument. Non-universality undercuts the claim to necessity. More important, Gaunilo threw down the gauntlet which every defender since has had to pick up, namely, that being, or existence, is not a category of predication. The conception of a perfect island does not necessitate its existence. Anselm replied that this is true of finite objects, but not of God whose existence is necessary.

3.2.17 As probably the most derided of all the theistic arguments, the ontological argument nevertheless continues to haunt philosophical theology. Later, in my discussion of the experience of God, I will argue that Anselm spoke of the necessity of God's existence in relation to God's self-evident immediacy. To be real is involved in what we mean by God. The very idea of God involves awareness of the reality of God. Awareness of God is present in the question about God. The difference Anselm appears to make is between finite things and infinite or unconditional being; that in the case of God he is a reality about whom we cannot even begin to think without at the same time being aware

that he has to be. The force of Anselm's argument may lie in distinguishing between the *idea* of God (about which we can argue) and the idea of *God*, which intuition he says is primal.

- 3.2.18 Modern skeptics have been uniformly dismissive of traditional arguments for the existence of God. Several trends powerfully reinforce this skepticism. These are, chiefly: Nineteenth century materialism reinforced by Darwinist naturalism, as in the work of Julian Huxley and John Dewey. Modern prophets of atheism such as the Britisher Gerald Priestland, Carl Sagan and Steve Allen, the actor, debunk religion. Two additional trends have added to the skeptical impulse. These are psychological naturalism, such as advanced by Sigmund Freud, William James, Mortimer Adler and William Sargent; and the Logical Positivism of A. J. Ayer followed by the more muted rejection of religious truth of the Language Analysis philosophers such as W. V. O. Quine and Antony Flew.
- 3.2.19 In the face of these trends, the revival of interest in the philosophical arguments for the existence of God is remarkable. It continues to be vigorous. During the past thirty years a significant body of literature has appeared which attempts to re-state many of the arguments. It may be useful to note a few trends and authors:
- 3.2.20 The cosmological argument has been carefully scrutinized by Austin Farrer, Richard M. Gale and Richard G. Swinburne.
- 3.2.21 The teleological argument is today a focus of interest among many. This interest builds on the work of writers of a generation ago such as F. R. Tennant, Robert Clark, E. L. Mascall and F. H. Cleobury. A number of scientists have weighed in on its side. They reject the materialist framework as not credible and favor some form of teleology in light of order in the universe. These include John Eccles, Owen Gingerich, Walter R. Hearn, Daniel Osmond, Arthur Peacocke, John Polkinghorne, Robert J. Russell, and Russell Stannard. Others could be added, notably those whose research leads them to reject identifying the mind with the functioning of physical brain.
- 3.2.22 Issues raised by the moral argument for the existence of God have evoked many recent studies. Some, like C. S. Lewis, H. D. Lewis and H. P. Owen, maintain that the ethical imperative points to a righteousness higher than our own. Others, like Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and William Hordern see proof for God's existence in the ethical imperative. Still others, such as Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling make a case for the divine reality on grounds of the ethics of obedience particularly the obligation to love.
- 3.2.23 H. D. Lewis develops a theology of the immediate intuition of God analogous to Anselm's ontological argument. More familiar forms of ontology are those developed by T. A. Burkhill, Charles Hartshorne, Paul Tillich, Jonathan Barnes and J. A. T. Robinson.
- 3.2.24 The skepticism of the Logical Positivist and Linguistic Analysis schools focused attention on the difference between mystery and puzzle. Appeal to mystery as entry into awareness of God is argued from the standpoint of the scientific enterprise (C. A. Coulson) and philosophy (M. B. Foster, I. T. Ramsey, Basil Mitchell).
- 3.2.25 Authentication of belief in God argued on grounds of primal religious intuition (E. Y. Mullins, C. S. Lewis), existentialism (Rudolf Bultmann, Helmut Gollwitzer, Hans Kung), the church as the sphere of salvation (M. B. Foster, Austin Farrer, E. L. Mascall) and mystical experience (K. E. Kirk, R. H. Thouless, Leslie Weatherhead, Paul Tournier and, in a joint effort, Fraser Watts and Mark Williams), are additional perspectives.
- 3.2.26 That Christ is the hinge of history and that he authenticates belief in God is the focus of books by Leonard Hodgson and David Jenkins.

3.2.27

Most philosophers and theologians who give credence to arguments for the existence of God understand them to be products of faith. They cohere within a paradigm in which some rational, teleological principle is needed to account for the order and creativity of the universe.

3.3.0

### **Recent Theistic Approaches**

3.3.1

Recent approaches to Christian theism converge on the ancient question of the possibility and manner of doing Christian theology. The ancient battle was between two methodologies: the way of negation (the *via negativa*, or *via negationis*) and the way of eminence or excellence (*via eminentiae*).

3.3.2

The *via negativa* proceeds by negating attributes of finite creatures which are measurable and mutable and then projects the mind from finitude to infinity. For example: Creatures are finite but God is infinite. Creatures are changeable but God is immutable.

3.3.3

The *via eminentiae* proceeds by elevating finite spiritual qualities to an infinite level by means of a mental step much like the modern psychological description of the "Aha!" experience: the penny drops; the light goes on. From earthly power one is triggered to think of omnipotence or unlimited power. From earthly affection, one forms the concept of transcendent divine love. From creaturely limitation and finitude thoughts of infinity are set in motion.

3.3.4

Each of these methods either assumes that the essential nature of God cannot be stated or says that it cannot on grounds of God's qualitative otherness from us (his aseity) and the analogical nature of language (perfection cannot be encompassed grammatically). H. P. Owen furnishes insightful discussion of many of these issues (*Concepts of Deity*, 1971; *Christian Theism*, 1984).

3.3.5

Four types of contemporary theistic formulation highlight the issue. These are Panentheist Theology, Crisis Theology, Process Theology and, finally, the Confessional Theology of mainstream Christianity.

3.3.6

I argue that the deep channel current which has given mainstream Christian theological thinking its direction, coherence and theological continuity, whether Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic or Protestant, is more the product of the *via positiva* methodology than the *via negativa*; however, only as based jointly upon reflection on the created order and the data of specific historical revelation which adds content and monitors reflection. The data of the biblical historical revelation are the correcting factors during the process of reflection and are the indispensable yardstick of conclusions which follow from reflection. Mainstream Christian theological conviction affirms that explicit things can be said about God confessionally. Which is to say that the truth of statements which authentically describe the nature of God are forms the eternal realities may take, and in fact do take.

3.3.7

They give us information about God, not the obscurity of non-objective hiddenness which characterizes Panentheism and the theoretical basis of some Crisis Theology. The claim is this: it is possible on a revelational footing to say that God is this and not that, and that such a proposition, predicated authentically and truly, describes his essential nature not merely his perceived relationship to the world and to us.

#### **a) Panentheist Theology**

3.3.8

Gordon D. Kaufman (*Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective*, 1968) is at pains to distinguish his historicist perspective from that of his intellectual mentor Paul Tillich, in the sense of recovering history as a locus of revelation which he feels Tillich had dismissed. Nevertheless, in Kaufman's development of revelatory history the concept of God is that of Ground of Being. In his development of the concept, God, though transcendent, appears to become functions of the human psyche and the pathologies of existence not unlike the Gnostic theories, except that the Gnostics loved to express their

metaphysics by means of synergistic pairs, while Kaufman is enamored of a synergistic trinity.

- 3.3.9 God is Ultimate Reality. God's revelation of himself (why Kaufman uses the personal pronoun is not clear because Ultimate Reality transcends personhood) historically is revelation in a continuous and developing history, which I take to mean biological and social history. This combines the absolute character of Being (unitary, transcendent, impassible) in the sense in which the ancient Monists had defined it with an unfolding of God within the created order not unlike the effort of the Gnostics. The contradiction is inherent, unless some other interpretation of Absolute Being is proposed. Very much depends upon what the metaphor "Ground of Being" means. It may be that he intends it as the immanent cosmic, creative principle in the manner of Process Philosophical formulation, though this would clash with his principles of hiddenness and transcendence.
- 3.3.10 The revelation of God as Ultimate Reality in developing history culminates in the person-event Jesus Christ. The meaning of the hyphenated noun person-event is unclear. It seems to mean that the Christ metaphysically and ethically transcends the significance of the earthly Jesus. If Kaufman regards Jesus as uniquely the carrier of God, this may be in the sense that Jesus is the first of an historical series (what then of early history of the human race?). The Christ reality is then duplicated in us.
- 3.3.11 As Ultimate Reality, God acts. Fundamental to God's action is self-giving or self-sacrifice. Why this should be the cosmic goal is not, for me, clear. Kaufman argues that this conclusion is not drawn by philosophical abstraction but is a recognition of historical reality. The Christ-event is such and such. This is how history and the life of Jesus are to be read.
- 3.3.12 The structure of divine activity is three-fold, which derives from analysis of the historical character of the divine revelation. For Kaufman, three-foldness is intrinsic to God's self-manifestation. It is logically justified on grounds of the perceived relational character of God. God's oneness is axiomatic. The three-foldness is modal. It is difficult to see how unipersonal language makes sense in a Trinitarian setting. God's modal relations with the world appear to provide the rationale for personhood, as they did for the ancient Modalists.
- 3.3.13 To re-state the point: Ontologically, Ground of Being, though spoken of in personal language, is impersonal or transpersonal. Triuneness is not ontological but relational. How does Kaufman's unipersonal ontology make sense in a Trinitarian, personal setting? The relations of the Ground of Being with the world provide that rationale. He insists, inconsistently I think, that while three-foldness is intrinsic, meaning modes, differentiations or masks, in these three the same one personal God is acting. The forms of this are:
- 3.3.14 First, the term Father refers to God's transcendence as Creator, Ultimate Source, Ground of all that is. He is the ultimate limit of everything finite; i.e., limit means the enclosing of the unlimited potentiality which the historical unfolding of the universe offers, into specific, finite entities.
- 3.3.15 Second, the term Son means God's revealedness to us or, more concretely, his presence to us in comprehensible form. The Son represents God's breaking out of his hiddenness, his coming to us in love, his uniting himself with humanity. In this respect Son and Servant are correlative terms which identify God's coming and his servant mode of presence in the Christ-event, which mode should lead us into that same manner of existence.

3.3.16 Third, the term Spirit identifies God's on-going presence. God is continually present and active in every moment of history, within us and among us, he says.

3.3.17 Despite Kaufman's qualifications as to the use of language, his formulation falls short of biblical understanding of both God and Christ. His premise (the *via negationis*) is that we can never use language literally about God. Rejections of literalism, whatever that slippery term means, is a favorite escape hatch in Idealist metaphysics. The question is, is what is said true and consistent? If nothing positive can be said about God, what is the meaning of the personal pronouns used of God, of concretely saying that God is personal, as Kaufman does?

3.3.18 If God is indeed personal, what is the meaning of this in the privacy of God's own life, before creation? Does not the mandate of relational three-foldness for personhood impugn the divine aseity? The early Church Fathers, especially the Cappadocians, saw this clearly. The orthodox confession concerning the ontological trinity means that the immanent perfection of the divine life from eternity, apart from creation, is the context of the fully personal relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The eternal God does not need the world to fulfill personhood through relations with the world. Further, salvation is essentially not illumination to servanthood, which is surely a beautiful concept; rather, it is divine action to redeem us from sin through the judgment death of the Cross. Salvation is an action of the trinity, not merely illumination as to divine modalities. The servanthood of Christ, duplicated in us, follows the redeeming work of God in us through faith *in* Christ, not reproducing in us the faith *of* the Christ-event.

#### **b) Crisis Theology**

3.3.19 The Crisis Theology of Karl Barth (1886-1968) and Emil Brunner (1889-1966), later known as Neo-orthodoxy, comprises a powerful polemic against nineteenth century Liberalism and against the use of Idealist frames of reference for Christian Theology. By crisis is meant the crisis of hearing God's Word and turning in faith to God upon hearing that Word. They produced what are arguably the most influential attempts in the twentieth century to restate confessional Christianity on a biblical footing. Their writings are replete with biblical exegesis and exposition, and they breathe the air of deep devotion to the Incarnate Lord.

3.3.20 Nevertheless, I raise a point of objection on a crucial issue. While I join Barth and Brunner on the issue at hand, I am well aware of the debate between them on the question of general revelation. Barth rejects it and fiercely attacks Natural Theology as an error which pervades both Roman Catholic theology and Liberalism. Brunner defended general revelation, though he believed that core truths of the Gospel are known only by special revelation.

3.3.21 The issue raised here concerns propositions about the nature of God. In what sense are they true, and to what extent can they be true? Barth rejects any Idealist attempt at correspondence between the divine nature and human nature. The gulf between God and humanity is metaphysically absolute. This precludes epistemological concreteness expressed verbally. Such statements can be only analogical; immediacy and the on-going character of the divine confrontation of humans by God are the critical issues. Nothing can be propositionally affirmed about God's essential nature.

3.3.22 Appeal to analogy in this case escapes the logical demand for verbal formulation of that which is actually the case about God. The possibility is denied. What the biblical prophets and apostles furnish to us, Barth and Brunner say, is credible witness to divine confrontation, not statements which disclose the essential nature of God. Only God can reveal God, the aphorism goes; God does not reveal information about himself, he reveals himself.

- 3.3.23            Is this the biblical format of the knowledge of God's nature? Biblical teaching, it seems to me, is that the knowledge of God conveyed is authentic and that the statements which convey it are true. Language functions to convey the truth about the essential nature of God. The truths written are the form the eternal realities take.
- 3.3.24            At bottom, it is not possible to have knowledge of God without knowledge about God because the Christian claim is not that of amorphous theism but the knowledge of the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The crisis created by the biblical Word and calls for obedience are not instigated simply by non-conceptual fiat. The challenge comes as an intelligible word not only from, but also about, the God who speaks.
- 3.3.25            Argument that the essential divine nature is totally veiled leads to uncertainty that any positive statement can be made about the divine attributes on grounds that the aseity and simplicity of God will be threatened. In the case of Crisis Theology, denial that God has disclosed divinely inspired truths about his nature leads to identifying God with his actions. The result is to exclude any essential knowledge of God. It constitutes a re-definition of the biblical revelation which becomes testimonies to immediate, episodic confrontations, but confrontations which convey no truths.
- 3.3.26            In earlier years I had thought that to overcome the essence-attributes disjunction which is inherent in medieval thought, which attempts to shield the impenetrable divine reality, one should, as Barth and Brunner say, identify the being of God with the totality of his actions ("Some Reflections on the Christian Doctrine of God," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 29.2, April-June, 1957). However, reflection on the biblical form of God's revelation as self-revelation conceptually and verbally communicated, undercuts such Nominalism as not good enough.
- 3.3.27            If the hidden God can become incarnate and this does not jeopardize his aseity or his simplicity, why can he not disclose truths about himself in propositional form? Such a thesis cannot cope, for example, with the plain biblical statement that "God is love." Surely this proposition is axiomatic, but it has been not at all self-evident to philosophers of the Idealist traditions and Plato, for one, goes out of his way to deny attribution of such a thing to the impassible Good. Is the proposition that God is love true? Is it true only in the sense that God's actions show love? Or, is it true as to the essential nature of God, and if one deems it to be merely analogical, of what is it analogical, and is it true that it is analogical in precisely the way that warrants the statement that God is love?

### c) Process Theology

- 3.3.28            Note my description of **A. N. Whitehead's** Process Philosophy in Chapter 1 (1.3.28 - 1.3.32) as the foundation of modern Process Theology. To this can be added the work of H. N. Wiemann and Charles Hartshorne, both of whom, along with Whitehead, have profoundly influenced American thought. Process Theology has largely displaced the old Theological Liberalism and is, today, the most significant non-evangelical theology in America. Theologians in Britain and America who have sought to express Christian faith in terms of a Process Theology include: Thomas Altizer, D. Brown, John Cobb, E. H. Cousins, Don Cupitt, D. R. Griffin, William Hamilton, Tom Harpur, R. M. Miller, John Macquarrie, Schubert Ogden, Norman Pittenger, John A. T. Robinson, Paul van Buren, and many others.
- 3.3.29            The French Jesuit scientist and theologian Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), largely independently, sought to combine a process view of the world with Christian theology, along evolutionary lines. Central to his thesis is a universe-wide evolutionary process which, in the case of the earth, produces more complex unities. As a scientist as

well as theologian, he posited that the process combines particles into complex atoms, atoms into molecules, molecules into cells, and cells into complex organisms. Physical complexity runs parallel with the emergence of consciousness and, finally, self-consciousness which has the capacity for reflective thought.

- 3.3.30 Complexity which arrives at life is the first great cosmic step. The second, crucial one, is "hominization," in which the universe becomes conscious of itself in human consciousness. Humanity is the carrier of the divine. There remains a third step, the "omega-point," when there will emerge a unity of all things, which will be suprapersonal.
- 3.3.31 Christ reflects in himself the final omega-point. His historical reality reassures us of its final actuality. The extent to which God is simply the dynamic of the natural evolutionary process in Teilhard's philosophy is a matter of dispute. The Vatican barred his writings. Does the creation move by the will of the Creator or in some panpsychistic sense through the dynamic of an immanent but not transcendent divinity?
- 3.3.32 **Lionel Thornton** (1884-1960), an Anglo-Catholic British scholar, sees the crux of the process to be Jesus Christ though, for Thornton, the incarnation is not a result of the process. God transcends the natural order. The Logos works dynamically within the world to create ever new, more complex, ascending entities.
- 3.3.33 Christ was manifest so that God is shown to be equally the end of the process as well as the initiator of the process at the creation. Christ's presence defies human nature. This will lead to formation of a new kind of society which is at present already proleptically present in the church.
- 3.3.34 Thornton's intention was to move away from arid discussions about Christian epistemology to the way the world actually works as a divinely created and developing order. He sought to transcend undue separation of humanity from the natural process, which should be seen as the handiwork of God. He took pains to safeguard the Incarnation as a specific, unique divine historical initiative. He followed through with this emphasis on the saving work of Christ which, he said, is redemption from sin through Christ's Cross, not culmination of process. Nevertheless, some critics hold that Whiteheadian process metaphysics tend to envelop Thornton's theology.
- 3.3.35 **Contemporary Process Theology** is far less hospitable to incarnation in the unique divine historical intervention sense than was Thornton. While some continue to affirm transcendence, in keeping with A. N. Whitehead's antinomies (*Process and Reality*, p. 528), in which both the aseity and mutability of God are affirmed, most Process Theologians adopt that side of Whitehead's thought which locks God into the cosmic process as the conserver and supplier of its ends, rather than Whitehead's abstractions which speak of transcendence, perfection and changelessness.
- 3.3.36 I turn to the work of **Norman Pittenger** as a representative of this school of thought (*Unbounded Love: God and Man in Process*, 1976). A modern conception of God, he says, must go beyond traditional understanding of "God out there." Revision must focus upon two key realities which are observable in the world, namely, life and love. God is the author of life and the chief end of life is love. The universe is the place where living love works (this contrasts with naturalistic evolution's "nature red in tooth and claw"). It may be asked why these elements are abstracted as ultimate reality and not the blackness of a disintegrating universe which Bertrand Russell mourns? Is it simply that "I prefer to think of it that way?"
- 3.3.37 The relational impulse is generic to the process. The purpose of God is not something added to the world, or decided by a God out there; it is the way the world is. This is the coming Kingdom. God is societal. He is constantly related to the world and is,

in fact, the process which moves from potentiality to actuality. Purpose equals enduring process. Its chief ends are the beautiful, loving relations we can have with one another. Godhead signifies such a societal ideal which is appropriated and actualized historically in the Galilean vision. We are all lovers in the making. The world's coming-to-be is the coming-to-be of God.

#### 3.4.0 **Classification of the Attributes**

3.4.1 A common charge brought against Christian Theology is that identification and exposition of the divine attributes has more to do with the canons of ancient Greek philosophy than with the beauties of simple Galilean faith. This view mis-states the historical and textual realities.

3.4.2 The Bible is always and in every part a deeply theological book. One can go to great lengths to show that the **Gospels** present a comprehensive range of data about the nature and attributes of God. The data inhere in story lines, narrative and teaching, all of which either state or imply specific concepts about God -- indeed, the entire socio-religious frame of reference is incomprehensible without recognition of this fact. Consider on one side the story of the Prodigal Son (*Luke 15*) and, on the other, the teaching of Jesus about the final judgment (*Matthew 24-25*).

3.4.3 In *Romans* the **Apostle Paul** argues that the one, true, personal, living God is Lord of both Jews and Gentiles (3:29-30); there is no other. There are not diverse gods for the diversity of humanity.

3.4.4 Paul's theological specificity is breathtaking (1:20-21). There are truths to be known about God, he says, which sinful humans ignore or distort. Even through nature *his invisible attributes* (NEB), *invisible nature* (RSV), *invisible qualities* (NIV) lie plain before human eyes. These are his *everlasting power and deity*. (NEB), *his eternal power and deity* (RSV), *his eternal power and divine nature* (NIV). This sampling of translations exhibits the struggle translators have in conveying the force of Paul's declaration: God, who is invisible, has furnished data to humans about himself in a public manner through the things which he has made which ought to be clear to the eye of reason. This has been the case since the world began. That which is essentially invisible has been (Paul does not say "might be") visible. If God's footprints in nature yield information about him, how much more may be expected from his revealed word? At issue is not whether God's works may yield valid insights into his nature, but the human distortion of their significance.

3.4.5 Later (3:1-2) he identifies that revealed word: the *oracles of God* (NEB, RSV), *the very words of God* (NIV), were entrusted to the Jews. *For we read in Scripture* (NEB) or *as it is written* (RSV, NIV) in the succeeding sentence (3:4) reinforces the concept of Scripture as the Word of God written. By this he means that the Scriptures give authentic knowledge of God. To give such authentic information in such a form is, Paul adds, a tribute to God's attribute of faithfulness (3:3).

3.4.6 What has Paul to say further in light of these things, as a bearer of the divine self-disclosure? God is righteous and just or, better still, he acts according to truth (2:2, 3, 5, 11). He is also kind, tolerant and patient (2:4). These are but a few markings of vast data about the nature and attributes of God which are explicit in the pages of the New Testament, as well as of the Old Testament.

3.4.7 Identification and exposition of the attributes of God was critically important to the early **Church Fathers** in order to distinguish Christian theism from theories of the pagan gods, and to present a positive case for the Christian understanding of God's nature.

- 3.4.8 God's unity is critically important to **Athenagoras** (c.175 C.E.) in his defense of Christianity written to the Emperor and Stoic philosopher, Marcus Aurelius. God's unity, he says, is not a compound of deities; *God is uncreated, impassible and indivisible. He does not, therefore, consist of parts* (Plea, 8). I have shown, he adds, *that we are not atheists* (by denying the reality of pagan deities) *since we acknowledge one God, who is uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, illimitable. He is grasped only by mind and intelligence, and surrounded by light, beauty, spirit, and indescribable power. By him the universe was created through his Word (Logos), was set in order, and is held together.* (I say "his Word"), *for we also think that God has a Son* (Plea, 10). He then goes on to describe the reality and glory of the Holy Trinity. Here is sophisticated argument as to the nature and attributes of God, the creator Logos, the Holy Spirit and the Trinity, early in the Christian era.
- 3.4.9 During this period, in another part of the Roman Empire, **Irenaeus** (c.130-c.200) proclaimed the same truths, this time against Gnostic perversions of the nature of God. In his *Against Heresies* he declares that the core issue is the truth that there is but one, true and living God, not many gods: *all the prophets proclaimed one God and Lord, and that the very Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things which are therein; while they moreover announced the advent of His Son, as I shall demonstrate from the Scriptures themselves, in the books which follow* (2.25.2). He then lists many of the names of God in the Old Testament which are intended, he says, not to identify diverse gods and powers, but attributes of the one, true God. He is unchangeable, eternal, and full of majesty (4.3.1). Irenaeus lists and expounds the attributes of God at length: power, wisdom, goodness, eminent kindness, perfection, uncreated, independent from the creation, creator, purposeful, sustains and nourishes the creation through his Spirit (4.38.3). The foregoing is but a brief intimation of the range and complexity of Irenaeus' theological formulation.
- 3.4.10 Commonly, the terms **attribute** and **perfection** are used interchangeably of God. An attribute is a quality attributed to any person or thing. With regard to God, these are distinguishing characteristics of his nature and intend to state that which is actually the case about God's nature. One must not fall back upon analogical obscurity, as important as analogy is. An attribute is a fundamental quality of God's being. They are perfections of God's nature. They are inherent qualities. They are essential or permanent qualities. Propositions which adduce them are either true or false. They purport to state that God is this and not that.
- 3.4.11 The scholastic question was, what have these to do with the essence of God (the essence/attribute disjunction)? Since God's nature is impenetrable - he is high and holy, the *deus absconditus* - is not his nature permanently veiled from view? This is the issue which I previously identified in my comments on Crisis Theology. Do we have information about God or only sporadic moments of the sense of a divine presence? Is theistic belief a solipsistic universe from which and about which nothing can be said.
- 3.4.12 The traditional solution to some of these questions in the theology of all three major Christian traditions (Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant) has been to group the attributes into those that are **incommunicable** (absolute, immanent) and **communicable** (relative, transitive). I note, however, that this scholastic formulation, while generic to most medieval and post-medieval Roman Catholic thought, and common in Protestant Theology, is not happily entertained in Eastern Orthodox theology. Nevertheless, Eastern Orthodox theologians take great pains to stress the transcendence, hiddenness and glory of God.
- 3.4.13 The **incommunicable** attributes are said to highlight God's transcendence. They are characteristics of God in himself, not specifically those which are constitutive of his relationship to the world. These include his **independence**, self-existence or self-sufficiency; **immutability**, impassibility or freedom from change; **infinity**, or freedom

from all limitation, including his power, presence, and knowledge; and **simplicity**, i.e., that in his being no elements conflict. All of these are epitomized in the proposition that God is infinite Spirit.

3.4.14 The **communicable** attributes are said to highlight God's immanence; specifically his relation to the creation. These include his holiness, freedom to act this way or that, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, goodness, truth, faithfulness. In the nature of the case these entail God's infinity. Also included are the so-called moral attributes, such as love, justice and righteousness, which reflect his personhood and comprise the moral foundation of his dealings with humanity.

3.4.15 Christians must affirm God's transcendence, infinity and the mystery of God's being. While doing so, however, let the affirmation not be an excuse for falling back upon non-conceptual claims to revelation, denying authentic knowledge of God's nature, and failing to come to grips adequately with the data of the Scriptures.

3.4.16 The incommunicable/communicable disjunction fails at important junctures. Impassibility relates to the constancy of God's faithfulness. Infinity is the foundation of omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. Holiness means more than transcendent otherness; it also identifies the purity of God's nature as the personal God, the "Holy one of Israel." I think it is better to conserve the phenomena (in this case the data of the Scriptures and the alethic claim made for them). While the biblical language and schema may appear to be non-philosophical, even simplistically anthropomorphic, it is, in fact, profoundly philosophical. I think that this approach is also apparent in the early church fathers. The writings of Justin Martyr, Athenagoras and Irenaeus may appear to be unsystematic and insufficiently probing, but they are in fact profoundly probing of the differences between the way Christians speak about God and the ways in which the polytheistic traditions spoke about the gods. Vocabulary conveys information, but it can also easily obscure by becoming obfuscating abstraction.

3.4.17 The mystery of God's hiddenness should not become a fall-back position for agnosticism, while at the same time contradictorily affirming specific things about God such as unknowability. On this point, surely the human personal analogy is apt. Who fully knows another human being? Indeed, can one person ever hope to fully communicate what he or she is? Is not the human "essence" (whatever that slippery word means) also hidden? Nevertheless, this fact does not preclude our accepting that authentic knowledge of another's nature and attributes is possible. That knowledge depends upon more than observation of behavior. Self-disclosure is crucial. Analogously, we can never know fully the nature of the infinite God. But we gratefully accept that authentic information about his nature and attributes has come to us historically through his self-disclosure.

3.4.18 At one stage I began developing a schema of the divine attributes which would conserve the phenomena and avoid the artificiality of the incommunicable/communicable disjunction. My aim was to correlate attributes which answer to each other, but I did not want to fall into the trap of the Gnostic synergistic pairs. I gave up that attempt in favor of isolating perceived grand themes of Scripture, within which many of the detailed attributes logically fit, and from which many of them as conceptions derive. Didactically and sermonically this seemed to be not only more useful; I believe that the grand themes of Scripture are what lend the Scriptures their timelessness and vitality. The following notations record the earlier attempt:

|        |                     |                                                                                                |
|--------|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.4.19 | <b>Spirituality</b> | personhood, invisibility, self-existence, living, life-giving                                  |
|        | <b>Infinity</b>     | immensity, aseity, independence, self-sufficiency, transcendence, mystery, incomprehensibility |
|        | <b>Eternity</b>     | infinity, without beginning or ending                                                          |

|                 |                                                              |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Glory</b>    | blessedness, perfection, brilliance                          |
| <b>Lordship</b> | sovereignty, governance, authority                           |
| <b>Freedom</b>  | will, purpose, election, choice                              |
| <b>Holiness</b> | uniqueness, incomparability, transcendence, moral perfection |
| <b>Love</b>     | goodness, acceptance, affection, fatherhood                  |

|                      |                                                   |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Impassibility</b> | unchangeableness, immutability                    |
| <b>Grace</b>         | pity, kindness, help                              |
| <b>Righteousness</b> | justice, rectitude                                |
| <b>Mercy</b>         | lovingkindness, compassion, charity               |
| <b>Omnipotence</b>   | limitless power, power to create, strength, might |
| <b>Patience</b>      | constancy, persistence, endurance                 |
| <b>Omnipresence</b>  | immanence, oversight, Lordship                    |
| <b>Unity</b>         | uniqueness, simplicity                            |
| <b>Omniscience</b>   | wisdom, knowledge, concern, understanding         |
| <b>Faithfulness</b>  | truth, veracity, covenant, Fatherhood             |

3.4.20 The **Thirty-Nine Articles** of the Church of England are a theological landmark. They were an effort to reform the Anglican (Episcopal) Church in light of the theological principles and controversies of the Protestant Reformation. Beginning in 1536 they emerged from a series of shorter versions until in 1571 the final form of thirty-nine was approved by the Convocation of the Church of England. They form the context for the later development of the Westminster Confession and, hence, through the Episcopalian and Presbyterian traditions, they played a significant role in early American religious and political life, along with despised Baptist principles against which both inveigh. The Articles are not a confession or creed. Clergy were required to subscribe to them but, since the middle of the nineteenth century, only to commit not to teach that which is contradictory to them. They are today largely ignored and have been supplanted by more recent statements in English Anglican and American Episcopal life.

3.4.21 Unlike modern statements of faith which often begin with Revelation and the Scriptures, the Articles begin with the reality and nature of God. It is fully Trinitarian:

3.4.22 *There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead, there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.*

3.4.23 Unity and Trinity are the key concepts. God is eternal (everlasting), impassible Spirit (without body, parts or passions), infinite (in power, wisdom and goodness), Creator of all things, Preserver of all things. Three co-equal persons comprise the unity of the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3.4.24 The tri-unity of the Godhead is the *sine qua non* of all that follows in the Articles. It is the defining concept. The statement does not lose itself in abstraction. Unity, personhood and redemption are the frame of reference.

3.4.25 While regarded as the key Presbyterian statement of faith, the **Westminster Confession** was not specifically Presbyterian in origin. In 1643 the English Long Parliament appointed a synod to reform the Church of England. The Westminster Assembly (so named for its initial meetings in Westminster Abbey) by statute comprised Anglicans (who out of loyalty to the Crown rarely attended), Presbyterians (the majority of those who participated), Independents and some others. Later, Scottish representatives were added. The Assembly met hundreds of times over succeeding years, until at least 1653 during the period of the anti-Royalist Commonwealth (1649-1660) under Oliver Cromwell. Documents produced were chiefly the Confession (1647), the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the Directory of Public Worship. These were adopted by the Church of Scotland and were enormously influential in Presbyterian life throughout the

world, especially in America. As well, Baptists adapted it for their own use. These include the London Confession of 1689, the Philadelphia Confession of 1742, Keach's (Baptist) Catechism of 1794, the New Hampshire Confession of 1833, and many modern Baptist and Believers Church denominational confessions of faith.

- 3.4.26 The Westminster Confession statement about God's nature and attributes, adopted by the Assembly in 1647, is as follows:

*There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal most just and terrible in his judgments; hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.*

In the Confession this statement is followed by several sections of exposition

- 3.4.27 I add the statement from the **Shorter Catechism**, also adopted by the Assembly in 1647. In answer to the question, What is God? the Catechism says:

*God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.*

- 3.4.28 Of all Protestant statements this one is remarkable for its brevity, structure, perspicuity, and coherence.

It begins by declaring that the essential nature of God is Spirit (which follows from Jesus' statement in *John* 4:24). Spirit is qualified in three ways: Infinite Spirit, Eternal Spirit, Unchangeable Spirit. Traditionally, these are the incommunicable attributes. Then are listed the communicable attributes; however, the distinction between them and the incommunicable attributes is not stressed. Rather, they are logical correlates as to the truth about God's nature. Thus, God is Spirit, Infinite, Eternal, Unchangeable as to his Power. Again, God is Spirit, Infinite, Eternal and Unchangeable as to his Holiness. And so on. What God is in his essential nature is revealed and is included in the reality and definition of each attribute. The infinity, simplicity and impassibility of God are maintained as part of everything God does because he has disclosed what he essentially is.

- 3.4.29 The **Princeton School** of Presbyterian Theology, which remained faithful to the Westminster Confession, influenced modern American evangelical life far beyond the Presbyterian Church, especially through the writings of Charles Hodge (1797-1878), his son Archibald Hodge (1823-1886) and Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921).

- 3.4.30 Charles Hodge in his *Systematic Theology* (1871) cautions against separating the attributes from the substance of God though, despite the warning, he retains the distinction in terms of negative (absolute) and positive (relative) attributes. His discussion then tracks the attributes as listed in the Confession and Catechism. He adds a final section on sovereignty. Not surprisingly, his Calvinistic leanings lead him to extended consideration of God's infinity, knowledge, purpose, and power, with only a short excursus on holiness and a somewhat longer one on God's love and benevolence.

- 3.4.31 **Augustus H. Strong** (1836-1921) in his magisterial work *Systematic Theology* (1907) has in this century developed the most elegant arrangement of the attributes along lines of the incommunicable/communicable distinction. First, he embraces both classes of attributes in his basic statement: *God is Spirit, Infinite and Perfect, the Source, Support,*

*and End of All Things*. He then presents each bank of the attributes in a three-fold way, though not implying thereby any correlation to persons or functions of the persons in the Godhead. They apply to the Godhead in the whole.

### 1. Absolute or Immanent Attributes

- A. Spirituality, involving
  - a) Life
  - b) Personality
- B. Infinity, involving
  - a) Self-existence
  - b) Immutability
  - c) Unity
- C. Perfection, involving
  - a) Truth
  - b) Love
  - c) Holiness

### 2. Relative or Transitive Attributes

- A. Related to Time and Space
  - a) Eternity
  - b) Immensity
- B. Related to Creation
  - a) Omnipresence
  - b) Omniscience
  - c) Omnipotence
- C. Related to Moral Beings
  - a) Veracity and Faithfulness,  
or, Transitive Truth
  - b) Mercy and Goodness,  
or, Transitive Love
  - c) Justice and Righteousness,  
or, Transitive Holiness

3.4.32

**Carl F. H. Henry** (*God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 volumes, 1976-1983) is heir to the Westminster Confession tradition, Baptist life and faith, and the theology of A. H. Strong. His is the most comprehensive theology in contemporary American evangelical life. His starting point is the concept of the name of God (which he had also focused upon in an early work (*Notes on the Doctrine of God*, 1948). Then, instead of concentrating upon a single, comprehensive scheme of the attributes, he disperses his formulation of the doctrine of God throughout the treatise as he expounds God's relation to the world, redemption through Christ's Cross, and God's final purposes. Notably, this takes place in the last, the sixth volume, not the first. The method is inductive, not to achieve abstraction, but to expound historical revelation. Attributes which he stresses include Goodness, Fatherhood, Holiness, Love, and Providence. His even-handed emphasis upon these embraces not only God's providential relations with creation, but also Henry's treatment of election under grace. Significantly, this awaited the final volume where he discusses core kerugmatic issues, rather than at the outset as an exercise in philosophical abstraction. Abstract issues on the nature of Spirit, infinity, omniscience, impassibility and knowledge are dealt with in the fifth volume. The first two volumes clear the ground philosophically and paradigmatically. They seek to convey key features of the Christian doctrine of God, but they do not confuse the canons of philosophical theology with briefings of God's self-disclosure which the Scriptures record.

3.4.33

**Finally**, I suggest two simple plans for preaching and teaching about God.

3.4.34 The first is a **two-fold** catechetical approach: **God as Creator**, under which data concerning creation, providence and purpose are developed. Then, **God as Redeemer**, under which are grouped attributes of grace, redemptive love, and saving purpose.

3.4.35 The second is a **three-fold** catechetical approach, namely: **God is Personal, God is Love, God is Good**. Under the first are gathered data concerning God's personal, triune nature and his personal concern for the world and humanity. Under the second are gathered truths about God's grace and condescension in Christ. Under the third are drawn together teachings about God's righteousness as tinged by grace and as the standard for morals and final judgment.

3.4.36 The *Psalms* are the biblical record of the soul's walk with God. They are the most complete biblical resource as to who God is, what his attributes are and the manner and terms of communion with him. Psalms such as the twenty-third, the forty-sixth and the ninety-first are unsurpassed as classics of devotion and profound theology. In the New Testament the summation of who God is and what God is like is Jesus Christ.

### 3.5.0 **Experience of God**

3.5.1 The most appropriate place in the Scriptures from which to begin an address to moderns about the reality and nature of God is Paul's announcement to the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers on Mars Hill (*Acts 17:16-34*). The creator of all things, he says, is not bound by, or restricted to, human images of God and the shrines of human religious pluralism. God gives life to all creatures and providentially relates himself to humanity in such a manner *that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us*. The quest need not be an uncertain, unending search because he is at each person's elbow. We who are his offspring need only stop to think of the one who made and sustains us in order to realize that he is at hand and that he is truly revealed in *a man whom he has appointed*, and authenticated by raising him from the dead.

3.5.2 What kind of reflection leads to experience of the true and living God?

3.5.3 It begins with a process of falsification and a lurking aspiration for truth. It begins, says Paul, with the suspicion that the gods of religious pluralism are silly imaginings (*17:29*), as the rational reflection of Greek philosophers such as Plato had long since concluded. It is urged forward in its quest by the inner conviction, already noted by pagan poets, that God is an inevitable and necessary part of our experience: *in him we live and move and have our being* (*17:28*). We are his offspring. We have our existence in him.

3.5.4 But the child is not the father. God is not us. That thought is sheer stupidity. Furthermore, God is not many. That thought is laughably irrational. There *can* be beautiful artistic representations of whatever we imagine to be divine (*17:29*), but as lovely as they are they are wrong. They follow from ignorance which needs correction. The cure for error of detail is correction of the way data are handled within a given paradigm. On the other hand, the cure for perspectival error such as the fantasies of polytheism in the nature of the case entail a paradigm shift. Falsification of a paradigm is painful. Embracing a new paradigm can also be painful, but not without an increasing sense of joy because of new discovery.

3.5.4a That paradigm is based upon the possibility that if God is not created in our image, perhaps accepting that we are created in his should leave us open at least to the possibility that he himself has had something to say. If we as persons speak, is God to be thought subpersonal? And if we should posit that he is suprapersonal, that will probably

turn out to be meaningless in our universe of discourse. If we can speak, why do we keep on thinking that God is dumb?

- 3.5.5 Tipping the scale of the delicate balance in reflection is willingness on our part to hear testimony - testimony which amounts to good news - that the one at hand has been speaking historically all along and that his speaking has been to a particular point, namely, that he would come personally in his own agent, the Messiah. Mutual recognition is in order. The penny drops. The idea clicks. Aha! The data fall into place! Like Augustine in the eighth book of his *Confessions*, our world falls into place in a new way.
- 3.5.6 If falsification is an essential component in coming to a new conviction about the reality and nature of God, what justification is offered for the new perspective of the Christian experience of God? Validation is in terms of coherence referentially oriented. The claim is not to coherence within a closed language game which is played by its own, internally consistent rules. The referential aspect is to historical data. Conviction as to the truth of the Christian understanding is authentically referential not merely because men and women in the past attest to experiences of God (that would be arguing in a circle), but that their lives and the events of nations around them about which they spoke fit over many centuries. Conviction as to its truth derives specifically from history and the general course of history, and self-awareness as to one's own moral condition. Jesus Christ himself is the apex of these historical events. That the testimony of the apostles and others around him is the way he is to be seen finds further validation in his teachings and the power of the Gospel to change human life.
- 3.5.7 It is the fruit of a delicate balance between the longing which draws us beyond our ignorance and conjectures (*representation of the art and imagination of men. the times of ignorance God overlooked*), the root conviction that there is a righteousness which must surely judge our easy relativist self-justification (*he has fixed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness*), and the light of new understanding because the ever-present, self-revealing one has called the world to a news conference about a decisive event. He who has been making his presence felt all along has now made himself known in Jesus Christ concretely, historically. But this briefing is not only the cure for our ignorance and distortions, it is a call to repentance.
- 3.5.8 In the marvel of God's condescending grace, self-disclosure is crucial. At no time since the time of Christ have the parallels between the human outlook then and since been closer than today. Today, as then, Hedonist self-fulfillment and Stoic fatalism are the prevailing moods and the gods appear too much to reflect human pathology. Is there room for a word from God? He says that he has always been at hand. In what ways?
- 3.5.9 Consider axioms of biblical teaching: God is spirit. There is but one true and living God. God has taken the initiative to make himself known.
- 3.5.10 There is but one who is God. This is the force of the golden text of the Hebrew Bible, the Sh'ma: *Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4)*.
- 3.5.11 That God is spirit follows from Christ's words (*John 4:24*). It follows also from the personal language of God's introduction of himself, *I am Yahweh (Isaiah 42:8)* and his call for reciprocal recognition which no other can either give or is worthy to demand. Paul's theme of mutual recognition is a striking parallel in *1 Corinthians 13:12, then I shall recognize more fully, even as I have myself been recognized* (my rendering). Spirit and personhood are interchangeable terms. The personal language of the Scriptures signifies self-disclosure of God as personal Spirit. The divine name is a means of the self-disclosure (*Exodus 34:6*) of one spirit (God) to another (a human spirit;). God introduces himself: *I am the Lord (1 Kings 20:13, 28)*, and expects a personal reply. Self-

identification and naming should evoke appropriate reciprocal recognition, not just one-sided recognition of us by God.

3.5.12 *Hallowed be thy name* in the prayer Jesus taught (*Matthew* 6:9) reminds us of the proscription against taking God's name in vain in the third commandment (*Exodus* 20:7). Also, it is a marker of God's sole divinity. God gives his name to no other. God's name identifies him personally and is a statement about his nature (*Deuteronomy* 28:58; 32:3; *Psalms* 8:9). Jesus said that he had come in his Father's name (*John* 12:28). On grounds of equivalence of honor with the Father, Jesus urged his disciples to pray in his name (*John* 16:23). God's name symbolizes his personal identity and it also describes his nature, character and attributes.

3.5.13 Such biblical usage calls for a distinction to be made between human and divine naming. Philosophers invent and assign names for the divine. In the biblical texts God names himself.

3.5.14 In the following, note that A. N. Whitehead invents a name for a divine principle which previously he feels lay undetected. It is Whitehead himself who is taking the initiative to name a divine principle, and the name he decides upon is intended to fill a gap in human understanding. It is human discovery, which is surely an important component in any Christian doctrine of revelation, but it is not what the Bible means about divine initiative. Plato invented the concept of The Good. Aristotle conceived of the Prime Mover. The Stoics called the divine principle the Logos, Plotinus the One, Hegel the Absolute, Spencer the Unknowable.

The passage is taken from Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World*, p. 173-174):

3.5.15 *Aristotle found it necessary to complete his metaphysics by the introduction of a Prime Mover - God ... For nothing, within any limited type of experience, can give intelligence to shape our ideas of any entity at the base of all actual things, unless the general character of things requires that there be such an entity ... In the place of Aristotle's God as Prime Mover, we require God as the Principle of Concretion. This position can be substantiated only by the discussion of the general implications of the course of actual occasions - that is to say, of the process of realisation.*

3.5.16 Contrast the foregoing with the text from *Exodus* 6:3. God names and identifies himself:

*I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of god Almighty: but by my name Yahweh was I not known to them.*

3.5.17 Irenaeus discusses the unique role of the divine names in regard to God's self-disclosure (*Against Heresies*, 2.35.3) where, after listing some of the names of God he adds:

*All the other expressions likewise bring out the title of one and the same Being; as, for example (in English), The Lord of Powers, The Father of all, God Almighty, The Most High, The Creator, The Maker, and such like. These are not the names and titles of a succession of different beings, but of one and the same, by means of which the one God and Father is revealed, He who contains all things, and grants to all the boon of existence (translated by M. Dods).*

3.5.18 God's name is intended to communicate information about his true nature. It constitutes a briefing. God identifies himself and speaks for himself. His many names constitute a gradual unfolding in history of his inner nature and his redemptive purpose.

- 3.5.19 Why should the name of this God be unique as divine self-disclosure? Why are his names not merely social conventions like many others are, projections of human imaginings about divinity? The answer is straightforward: on grounds of credible testimony that at specific times, in specific places, God spoke to specific men and women with the mandate to communicate the truth about himself and his purposes to others. These speakings have become the structure and content of a new paradigm and the measure of claimed experiences of God. Is it not the case that this paradigm, like all others before it, will be challenged in the whole or in part? In principle the Christian must answer, yes; certainly as to misconstruing many parts of it. For the rest, as to its core claim that God is personal and is personally revealed, the Christian happily will allow his axiom to stand the test of time and experience, acknowledging with Paul that now “we know only in part.” The Christian’s testimony can be only, “Come stand where I stand and see if you can see what I see.” The rest is up to the gracious working of the God Christians love and to the willingness of any person to hear and respond.
- 3.5.20 There are dozens of metaphors which identify God’s nature and attributes such as Shepherd, Vinedresser, Physician, Husband. Two key name groups are the primary focus of God’s self-disclosure in the Old Testament. These are the EL group and the YAHWEH group. The reader will be well served to read a translator’s preface to discover how these names are rendered in translation and printing of the English text.
- 3.5.21 **EL** is the generic name for God in Semitic literature, much like God is the generic name for the deity in English. It epitomizes monotheism as God’s gift of knowledge about himself to the world through Abraham, Moses and the prophets. The main forms are EL, ELOAH, ELOHIM, ELYON. They identify God as the exalted, almighty creator. In compound forms the sense of transcendence along with might is retained: EL ELYON (most high, *Genesis* 14:18), EL SHADDAI (God almighty, *Genesis* 17:1, note the recognition formula), EL BETHEL (God of Bethel, *Genesis* 31:13), EL ROI (God of seeing, *Genesis* 16:13), EL ELOHE ISRAEL (God of Israel, *Genesis* 33:20), EL OLAM (God everlasting, *Genesis* 21:33)
- 3.5.22 Authors recount the experience of God and what was understood about God’s nature in light of that experience. Invariably they report that the initiative is God’s. His coming is not due to importuning or wheedling. Nor is God’s presence the result of formal religious ceremonies. God has come to them, unobtrusively, specifically, unmistakably. Later, I will address the manner of this speaking and its relation to our experience and faith.
- 3.5.23 The name **YAHWEH**, along with compounds of the name, is the most common name of God in the Old Testament. In the RSV it is translated LORD in capital letters, to distinguish it from Elohim which is translated God. Joint reference to these names occurs in the crucial passage *Exodus* 3:13-16, in which God identifies himself to Moses at his commissioning to lead Israel. The one who speaks to Moses is the same as he who spoke with Abraham, except that now a further disclosure is being made through the significance of Yahweh which Abraham had not known.
- 3.5.24 Yahweh carries a range of meanings: God is transcendent, eternal, sovereign. His eternity is not an issue for speculation, but grounds for confidence. The one who inhabits eternity is actually present unfailingly among his people. He who has been present, who will be present in the future, is now indeed present. This is his side of the covenant with his people. The Lord of all is with his people and will save his people. The name Yahweh is uniquely related to God’s covenant dealings with his people, to grace and redemption. His might (EL SHADDAI) is shown in his providential care, his grace through his covenant to redeem (YAHWEH).
- 3.5.25 The many compounds of YAHWEH are each a sermon about God’s nature and dealings. Examples include: YAHWEH-JIREH (God will provide, *Genesis* 22:14).

YAHWEH-ROPHE (God who heals, *Exodus* 15:26). YAHWEH-NISSI (God my Savior, *Exodus* 17:15). YAHWEH-M'KADDESH (God who sanctifies, *Leviticus* 20:8). YAHWEH-SHALOM (God is peace, *Judges* 6:24). YAHWEH-TSIDKENU (God our righteousness, *Jeremiah* 23:5-6). YAHWEH-ROHI (God my shepherd, *Psalms* 23:1). YAHWEH-SHAMMAH (God is there, *Ezekiel* 48:35).

3.5.26 Transition in understanding is indicated in *Exodus* 6:2-3. What is disclosed in the time of Moses that was not disclosed in the time of Abraham? It appears to be bound up with the significance of the two names EL and YAHWEH, and the enigmatic phrase "I am who I am" in *Exodus* 3:14. While the name YAHWEH had been known, now a new significance is added. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who had always been there with them, would indeed always be with them. The eternal God is ever in our present. He is eternally there. The might of the creator is harnessed to the work of providence and redemption.

3.5.27 God's might and saving grace are parallel themes throughout the prophets. Passages in Isaiah are striking examples. Note 40:18-21. I cite several sentences from chapter 43:10-15, 25-26, in which the sense of both groups of the name of God combine in a hymn of praise:

*That you may know and believe me, and understand that I am He.  
Before me no God was formed  
nor shall there be any after me.  
I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior  
I am God, and also henceforth I am he,  
there is none who can deliver from my hand,  
says your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel  
I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake,  
and I will not remember your sins.  
Put me in remembrance...*

3.5.28 An important association is discernible between the name YAHWEH and **Fatherhood**. This metaphor has reference to a genuine reality of the divine nature. Its poignancy reflects the covenant love of YAHWEH, the redeemer of his people. It is wrong to depict Old Testament teaching about God as stern and judgmental. The concept of God's fatherhood in creation, begetting (calling) his own covenant people and caring for them as a Father, is present in the Old Testament literature throughout Israel's history. Fatherhood gives heart to the Old Testament: God knows his own. He loves them and cares for them.

3.5.29 The Deuteronomic literature highlights God's fatherhood by right of creation (*Deuteronomy* 32:6). God is Father to Israel by right of covenant choice and his bearing them through the harsh wilderness (*Deuteronomy* 1:31). In *Psalms* 103:13, David utters the immortal words: *As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him*. The later literature is replete with teaching about God's fatherhood (*Isaiah* 63:16, 64:8; *Jeremiah* 3:4, 19; 31:9; *Malachi* 1:6; 2:10), and about Israel's sonship (*Deuteronomy* 14:1; *Isaiah* 1:2; *Jeremiah* 31:20; *Hosea* 11:1).

3.5.30 Old Testament teaching is the backdrop for the full-orbed New Testament doctrine of God's Fatherhood as creator and redeemer, conjoined in the work of both Father and Son. Paul relates the Fatherhood of God and the Lordship of Christ to creation and providence (*1 Corinthians* 8:6). It is the focus of his message to the Athenian philosophers, "*being then God's offspring...*" (*Acts* 17:29, note also *Ephesians* 3.15). The writer of Hebrews refers to God's universal fatherhood as an assumption of authentic Judeo-Christian discourse (*Hebrews* 12:9).

- 3.5.31 When one reads the recorded words of Jesus in the Gospels it becomes quickly apparent that the backdrop of Old Testament teaching about the fatherhood of God becomes a key feature in Jesus' teaching. His teaching reflects his filial relationship. Jesus' own relationship to the heavenly father becomes the pattern for his disciples' relationship with the Father. The words of approach and address in the model prayer Jesus taught his disciples ever after become the ground of confidence Christians have as they come to God with child-like trust, "*Our Father, who art in Heaven...*(Matthew 6:9). He is the *Holy Father* whose identity and nature Jesus discloses (*John* 17:6, 11) to the end that they, like he himself, might enjoy the unity of the life of the Godhead.
- 3.5.32 During the heyday of Liberal Theology at the end of the last century and the beginning of this century Peter Taylor Forsyth, the British preacher-theologian, addressed the Congregational Union in 1896 in a sermon entitled *The Holy Father and the Living Christ*. In this address Forsyth sounded themes which countered the soft fatherhood theology which was characteristic of Liberal Theology. His key theme was God's Fatherhood in relation to God's holiness, justice and grace in the Cross of Christ. True fatherhood, he said, turns one from being a lover of love to an object of grace. Fatherhood is the revelation of God's first and last relation to the world. This is not sentimentality masked as fatherhood. It is *Fatherly holiness whose satisfaction in a Holy Son is the great work and true soul of Godhead*. God is the *holy* Father. For our sins *he offers a sacrifice from his own heart ... Fatherhood is not bought from holiness by any cross; it is holiness itself that pays*. Forsyth's theology became a catalyst for the new biblical theology which emerged as an antidote to Liberal Theology, notably the theology of Emil Brunner, whom Forsyth influenced when Brunner as a young man lived in London and heard Forsyth preach. Fundamental to Crisis Theology was a questioning of Liberal Theology canons as to the meaning of God's Fatherhood.
- 3.5.33 Fatherhood and sonship are core elements of the Christian understanding of God. Apart from a fully Trinitarian understanding of God's nature the Christian realities become incomprehensible. Absent the Trinitarian frame of reference, Christ's sonship becomes a temporal derivative and the meaning of love in the nature of a unipersonal God an uncertainty, Christian sonship becomes the vanity of achieving Christ's status as adopted sons by means of illumination apart from redemption through the incarnate Lord, or the distinctions within the Trinity become aspects of the human quest for identity.
- 3.5.34 The uniqueness of the New Testament revelation, and its climax, is that God has given his name to Christ, the name which discloses his loving Fatherhood. In Jesus Christ we know who and what God is. He who is the God and Father of Jesus Christ becomes also the Father of all those whom Christ brings with him.
- 3.5.35 If historical revelation as embodied in the canonical Scriptures furnishes us information such as that God is self-disclosed in his name, information about God's nature that is true, and if God continues to make his presence felt immediately, concretely, contemporaneously in the experience of individuals, in what ways can these two aspects of Christian understanding be correlated coherently? The answer lies in a canon of truth. That measure is not - indeed, cannot for Christians be - unqualified claims to experience. If I should say that I am experiencing God now, that he is standing on the palm of my hand, and that he has a red nose, rounded ears, is wearing a silk jacket and trousers and blue shoes, I should be deemed to be a lunatic. The Scriptures are the canon of the truth about God. They are the measure of claims to experience and of propositions which purport to describe God. It is in this primary sense that the Scriptures are a canon. The Bible is indeed a canon in the sense that it is comprised of a particular collection of books. But the primary sense of their being a canon lies in their function to measure claims to the experience of God and the validity of propositions about the authentic content of the Christian religion. This function is what the early Church Fathers meant by *The Rule of Faith* or *The Rule of Our Tradition*. When modern Christians accept the

authority of the Scriptures in the phrase *The Bible says...* they usually do not mean arbitrary, blank authority. They mean that it comprises the Rule of Faith. Its teachings measure that which is authentically Christian.

- 3.5.36 Consider the following: The revelation of God is historically rooted in the experience of God of Old Testament figures. As well, God comes to us today, Paul declares on Mars Hill in Athens (*Acts 17*). I suggest that Anselm's Ontological Argument has more to do with a primal datum of personal presence than logical necessity. The necessity or inevitability of the conclusion lies in the immediate awareness of God's presence. Commonly, in our experience there forms a conviction about the truth of self-evident immediacy. By saying that thinking about God involves awareness of the reality of God is meant a primal intuition. Interpretation of the significance of that intuition is critical. I owe the basic insight in what follows to H. D. Lewis (*The Experience of God*, 1959) who argued that the experience of God has the immediacy of a primal datum. I see a correlation between the claim to immediacy and Anselm's argument from necessity.
- 3.5.37 Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, David and Isaiah all experienced God as the transcendent one in finite situations. God was experienced immediately and the ramifications of the experience as a whole - in its historical context - yielded insights as to God's true nature as Yahweh-Righteousness, Yahweh-Peace, the high and holy Elohim, to name but a few. The conviction of God's reality came as one leap of thought; as an immediate intuition; as a root conviction. These biblical situations and experiences are not used to prove the existence of God; rather, *God is the inescapable ground of the experience and of the whole world*. Any reading of the Psalms conveys the truth of this overwhelmingly.
- 3.5.38 Their experiences of God occur within the context of wonder. This was in sharp contrast to the noise and tumult of pagan worship where the attention of the gods must first be secured, or who must be awakened out of slumber. It is disturbing wonder, sharp and disrupting, which leads to the conviction that the whole of our existence and the world stand in a relation of absolute dependence upon the transcendent reality, God. Such experiences are not confined to special moments of illumination, nor are they triggered spontaneously, without fail, *ex opere operato*, by formal religious exercises.
- 3.5.39 Wonder comprises the backdrop to the experience of God. The experience of God is not detached from other experiences. Wonder reinforces moments of special awareness though it is not confined to them. Wonder does not evacuate or numb the mind. There is a heightening of self-awareness, not detachment from the self. There occurs a sharpening of awareness and the critical faculties.
- 3.5.40 God speaks in **stillness**, in the stillness which finds its opportunity in wonder. In stillness the powers of perception gather the data of the experience and one's historical context to awareness that God is present. Awareness of his presence generates expectant waiting for his word. *Lord speak, for your servant hears*.
- 3.5.41 In face of earthly tumult the Psalmist declares *Be still, and know that I am God* (*Psalms 46:10*), and in another place *Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him* (*Psalms 37:7*). As the prophet Elijah sulked in the wilderness following his escape from Jezebel, God spoke to him (*1 Kings 19:12*). God was not in the terrible storm, nor in the earthquake, nor in fire. His presence was known by the *still small voice* - a voice which evoked wonder, worship and obedient response. Modern worship, especially evangelical worship, has lost the sense of wonder and the stillness in which God speaks.
- 3.5.42 God is experienced as personal from the start. God's transcendence does not entail that God is impersonal. It means that though present he cannot be identified with any feeling, creature or object, including developing nature. He comes quietly,

insistently, convincingly as the transcendent, personal, self-disclosing Creator. He addresses us. The address is pressing and inescapable.

3.5.43 God's speaking to us is reinforced, clarified and interpreted for us by the *many and varied ways* God spoke by the prophets. Climactically, *he has spoken to us by a Son (Hebrews 1:1-2)*. Our own personal religious experiences are important as testimonies to God's presence; nevertheless, the records of the experiences of the prophets and apostles are normative in ways ours can never be, either for ourselves or for others. Our experiences, as authentic as they may be, do not comprise a canon; theirs, under the recording inspiration of God's spirit, do. Canon means that their record measures our claims; we ourselves are not the final measure of the knowledge and experience of God. The course of those historical disclosures led finally to Jesus Christ. He himself is the authentic measure of the knowledge and experience of God. Who and what Jesus Christ is, is who and what God is. The presence of the incarnate Lord coheres with the primary conviction of God's personal presence to us.

3.5.44 Historical situations are the common contexts in which God's presence is sensed and intervention perceived. Such situations are providential, they are not contrived or induced by us. God speaks suddenly and unobtrusively and, often, surprisingly.

3.5.45 There are **times of need** during which help comes, which we know derives from beyond ourselves. The twin Psalms 42 and 43 poignantly convey the blackness of deep depression, from which pit escapes only the plaintive cry, *Why?*

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my help and my God.*

Here through worship the light of God's presence and the truth about him renew confidence, kindle hope to live, and restore joy (42:5, 11; 43:3, 5). Discouragement leads to depression but the depression need not end in despair. The soul finds refuge in God himself (42:1-2).

Jeremiah, beaten, imprisoned, locked in cruel stocks experienced mounting anxiety that he had been misled and forsaken by God (*Jeremiah 20:7*), and he cursed the day he was born. Yet even in the darkness new confidence as to the ultimate righteous judgments of God against evil could move him to say, *Sing to the Lord a new song (20:13)*.

Paul, facing possible lynching by a violent mob sensed God's presence and word of encouragement (*Acts 23:11*). This word carried him through judicial trials and ultimately witness in Rome and a martyr's death.

3.5.46 There are **moments of deviation and guilt** when the accuser's presence is accompanied also by reassuring love and forgiving grace. God's presence combines awareness of him as Judge and as Redeemer.

The resistance of Balaam's ass to his course of action to curse Israel as a hired hack brought into sharp focus that he himself was acting like an ass (*Numbers 22:21-35*), which became a morality tale of moral turpitude (*2 Peter 2:15*).

The prophet Nathan's accusatory words to David about his sin with Bathsheba (*2 Samuel 12:1-23*) was clearly grasped as a word from God himself, against whom he had sinned personally (v.13).

Isaiah recounts his vision of God whose high and holy presence evoked a deep sense of his own sinfulness and unworthiness, but also the grace of forgiveness and healing (*Isaiah 6*). John's experience in his vision of the exalted Christ is parallel (*Revelation 1:17-18*).

3.5.47 God's presence is the presence of righteousness, sharp and painful, which carries with it not only the balm of healing for the soul but rest for the mind in the hope of final vindication of good in the world.

3.5.48 Such historical situations are the forms the eternal realities take. The events are more than inventions of a private, existential world. They are not merely timeless and abstract. They are concrete and particular. The Scriptures embody truth-bearing description of the one who speaks, the substance of his word and the conditions of our response. The climax of God's speaking and self-disclosure is Jesus Christ, his only Son, the Eternal Word.

### 3.6.0 **The Greatness of God**

3.6.1 The greatness of God, who transcends all of nature, who is the creator and Sustainer of all life, and who because he alone is God brooks no competitor, is a core theme of the Scriptures. The prophet Isaiah (40:12-14; 28-31) eloquently states this truth:

*Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand  
and marked off the heavens with a span,  
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure  
and weighed the mountains in scales  
and the hills in a balance?  
Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord,  
or as his counselor has instructed him?  
Whom did he consult for his enlightenment,  
and who taught him the path of justice,  
and taught him knowledge,  
and showed him the way of understanding?  
  
Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary,  
his understanding is unsearchable.  
He gives power to the faint,  
and to him who has no might he increases strength.  
Even youths shall faint and be weary,  
and young men shall fall exhausted;  
but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.*

3.6.2 Confessional expressions of these truths have properly focused upon God as infinite Spirit. He is, as the Westminster Shorter Catechism declares, Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable.

3.6.3 Biblically, this truth is expressed in the following ways:

3.6.4 **1. God is Infinite Spirit.** Infinity means that God is beyond finitude and beyond the possibility of limitation. His life is not of necessity bound to space and time. He is

God alone, unique. There is no limitation to his wisdom, greatness or power except that which he himself determines in accordance with his own holy nature.

3.6.5 That God is Spirit derives directly from the words of Jesus (*John* 4:24). The definition of Spirit should not be left in negative terms, as in "Spirit is not matter." The biblical account makes positive statements. Spirit means personhood. Spirit is the self-conscious subject. Spirit is not simply a listing of attributes, whether human or divine (which is a behavioral definition); rather, Spirit is the living, personal subject of them. A person is more than the sum, or description, of his or her actions. This is what the personal language of the Scriptures when used of God, and by God, means and, I believe, is intended to convey.

3.6.6 The challenge of *Isaiah* 31:3 is a satirical build-up which highlights a three-fold truth: a) Horses are not spirits; b) Men are; c) But they are not God (the supreme Spirit and author of all spirits). *I am that I am* (*Exodus* 3:14) conveys the same truth. God speaks personally as only a spirit can. Repeatedly he says (*Isaiah* 42:8; note also 43:11, 25; 44:6):

*I am the Lord, that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to graven images*

3.6.7 That God is self-revealed to be fully personal, infinite Spirit undercuts any rationale for exclusionary dread. This truth generates confidence that he takes the initiative for mutually personal relations between himself and humans who he has created in his own image. In contrast to notions of infinity as necessitating non-personhood or trans-personhood, the biblical record re-assures us that God the infinite Spirit comes to us and says, "It is I, come let us commune together." Again, through the prophet *Isaiah* the Lord says (*57:15*),

*For thus says the high and lofty One  
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:  
I dwell in the high and holy place,  
and also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit,  
to revive the spirit of the humble,  
and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

A woman may forget her baby, but God will not forget any one of us (*Isaiah* 49:15).

3.6.8 **2. God is transcendent Spirit.** God's transcendence declares his aseity, his independence, and his Lordship. He does not transcend other persons or things as one among a class. He transcends all of nature as the independent Creator. He does not depend for his life or fulfillment of his being upon the developing cosmic process; he is other than, and is beyond, the universe.

3.6.9 The term infinite qualifies an entity or aspect of an entity. In our use of it we are triggered (the *via eminentiae*) to transcend the meaning of a finite quality to a transcendent value by a flash of insight. God's infinity means that the universe stands in a relation of absolute dependence upon him. Hence the emphasis upon transcendence as unpicturableness (*Isaiah* 40:18, 25; 46:5; *Psalms* 89:6) and as a statement of supreme Lordship (*Isaiah* 41:4; 44:6).

3.6.10 **3. God is Eternal Spirit.** He is without beginning or ending. The holy (transcendent) One *inhabits eternity* (*Isaiah* 57:15). His years have no end (*Psalms* 102:25-27). The truth that *from everlasting to everlasting thou art God* is the foundation for faith that the Lord, the Creator, who has been our dwelling place will ever be the same (*Psalms* 90:1-2).

3.6.11                    **4. God is Glorious Spirit.** The glory of God is his perfection or the overwhelming radiance of his presence. Moses was sheltered while God's glory passed by (*Exodus 33:22*) and Isaiah was dazed by God's presence (*Isaiah 6:1-5*).

3.6.12                    Paul speaks of the *glory of the immortal God* (*Romans 1:23*). He relates the veiled glory of God which Moses experienced to the unveiled glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (*2 Corinthians 3:15-18*). In Jesus Christ God has removed the veil which shielded Moses from the full glory of God. Analogously, the Old Covenant represents a veil. With the revelation of God in Christ in the New Covenant, the veil of the Old can be lifted by turning to Christ. The unveiled glory is the incarnation. Jesus Christ is God present in the flesh. This is the pattern into which Christians are being transformed, through redemption, from one stage to another, namely, into the image of the Spirit-bearing humanity of the incarnate Lord:

*But when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed...  
And, we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord  
are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another.*

- 3.6.13 God's glory is God's God-likeness. His glory as perfection, or brilliance, points to his holiness - his transcendent difference from earthly kind combined with awareness of a moral perfection which indicts us. God's glory in Jesus Christ makes historically evident that which he intended humanity to be, and intends that redeemed humanity become.
- 3.6.14 Final sanctification is redemption's goal, which reflects the glory of God not as brilliance in the abstract but as the hallowing of life. It is life which is attended by the joy and felicity of fellowship within the life and work of the Godhead. Glory includes joy. This is the final glory. God's glory is evident in the brilliance of his presence and in his wonder-working power, but his saving power is its greatest manifestation with Godlikeness as its end.
- 3.6.15 **5. God is Infinite in Power. He is Omnipotent.** God is EL-SHADDAI, God Almighty (*Genesis 17:1*). He is the *great and mighty God whose name is the Lord, YAHWEH (Jeremiah 32:18)*. He is Lord of creation, not an aspect of it (*Exodus 15:11; Psalm 29:10*): *He spoke and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth (Psalm 33:9)*. New Testament teaching parallels the Old Testament, especially in the term *pantokrator*, the Almighty (*Revelation 1:8*), which is applied to Christ. It is a self-evident truth in biblical teaching that *with God nothing will be impossible (Luke 1:37)*.
- 3.6.16 The biblical writers do not speculate about the exercise of God's power. His power is all-embracing for the full range of his purposes. He cannot deny himself (*2 Timothy 2:13*). It is impossible for God to be false (*Hebrews 6:18*). He cannot be tempted by evil nor is he fickle (*James 1:13, 17*). He is the *Lord of hosts, the King of glory (Psalm 24:10)* whose power is not exhausted by what he has already created.
- 3.6.17 God by his power works not only to create and to sustain, he also by that same power acts to redeem. God's might has a relational end, which is to conserve fallen humanity through Christ's saving work. Christ's Gospel is *the power of God for salvation for everyone who has faith (Romans 1:16)*. God's demonstration of power to save is not arbitrary. It is to show that he is *just and the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:26)*. The final demonstration of power was the humility of the Cross where what God justly demanded he himself provided.
- 3.6.18 **6. God is Infinite in Presence. He is Omnipresent.** God's presence is comprehensive. Nothing is hidden from him (*Psalm 139:7*, note the entire Psalm). That he who is enthroned in heaven (*Psalm 123:1*) "comes down" does not indicate spatial limitation but historical intervention, as in his judgments against Egypt (*Exodus 7*). Jesus declared to the woman at the well (*John 4:20-24*), and Paul declared to the Athenian interrogators (*Acts 17:24, 17-28*), that God is not localized in shrines made by human hands. He is everywhere present. He is *above all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:6)*.
- 3.6.19 God's presence does not entail metaphysical diffusion of the divine being throughout nature in a pantheistic, panpsychistic or panentheistic sense. God is not heads to the tails of a single coin of the universe. God is fully personal and is personally present throughout creation.
- 3.6.20 The incarnation of Jesus Christ means that God became uniquely and personally present in the world. Christ is the *likeness of God (2 Corinthians 4:4)*. *He has made him known (John 1:18)*. *He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15)*. Ever after his

ascension, Christ will be present wherever his children are assembled together (*Matthew 18:20*).

3.6.21 The presence of God in Christ has not only redemptive significance because the Cross is God's provision; as well, there is on-going significance in the manner in which the Gospel applies to humanity. There is a relational sense to the presence of God; namely, that the relations between human beings and God should be mutually personal, not merely one-sidedly personal. God's distance from us or nearness to us depends upon our distance from him or nearness to him. Entailed is a qualitative, spiritual dimension. Sin creates distance. It separates and alienates us from God (*Isaiah 1:15-18; 59:2*). Redemption involves not only atonement but also reconciliation so that the distance between us and God is removed. Through forgiveness we return to God's fellowship. Paul felicitously says (in the case of Gentiles) *but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13)*.

3.6.22 **7. God is Infinite in Knowledge. He is Omniscient.** God knows his creation from beginning to end, every detail of it. His knowledge is comprehensive; it embraces the entire creation. *He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?* asks the Psalmist (*Psalms 94:9*). God searches all hearts (*1 Chronicles 28:9*, note *Psalms 139*). His understanding is unsearchable (*Isaiah 40:14*). He declares the end from the beginning (*Isaiah 46:9-10*). Paul extols the unbounded knowledge and wisdom of God in his sovereign foreknowledge and electing grace (*Romans 11:33-36; Ephesians 1:7-10*).

3.6.23 God's prescience does not necessitate predetermination. Christians reject the Idealist premise that everything is perfectly predetermined in the mind of God. To be sure, what God wills he can and will do. What does he will? The biblical answer is free good persons redeemed in Christ. We cannot know many details of God's infinite purposes, but we know what he means by Jesus Christ (*Romans 8:11*). Sin means that God has in freedom granted freedom. Redemption signifies that the freedom patterned in Christ will be realized in us. The purpose of the Creator is freedom: *if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed (John 8:36*, note v.32). True freedom is knowledge of and doing the will of God: *Lo, I have come to do thy will (Hebrews 10:9)*. We are brought into that willing obedience by being taken up into Christ's obedience (v.10), which is the first and primary meaning of sanctification. Grace is a function of personal relations in virtue of which God is free and in virtue of which he provides for, and calls us to, freedom.

3.6.24 When the Scriptures say that God knows a person, it is equivalent to saying that God saves a person. Banishment is the obverse of recognition: *I do not know you ... depart from me (Matthew 25:12, 41)*. The object of grace is recognition: *if one loves God, one is known by him (1 Corinthians 8:3)*. This theme pervades Paul's thought on questions of election and grace (*Romans 8:28-30*). *The Lord knows those who are his (2 Timothy 2:19)*.

3.6.25 **Concluding comment:** Historical situations are the stuff of biblical understanding about the greatness of God. Prophetic and Apostolic accumulation and interpretation of historical data foster insight and nurture understanding. A review of the process is instructive, provided that the unfolding is seen not as evolutionary in the sense that the concept God is evolving; rather, the process comprises an ever fuller disclosure by God of himself, along with constant repetition and reminder for humans who tend to forget or to distort the data.

3.6.26 At Ur and at Haran, Abraham had to believe that God would be with him even in a distant, unknown land. He left his father's house in faith, not knowing what lay ahead, except that the living God had called him and would be with him (*Genesis 12:1-9*, note *Hebrews 11:8-10*).

3.6.27 When Jacob fled his father's house because of duplicity toward Esau, the vision of the ladder to heaven forced a change in his thinking about God's location (*Genesis* 28:10-22). Surely, he thought, God could not be in this forsaken place (28:16)! God must still be back at my father's house where the household gods are kept. But God identified himself as the same God who had spoken to his fathers: *I am the Lord (YAHWEH) the God (ELOHIM) of Abraham your father and Isaac*. Jacob names the place Bethel, the house of God. He had learned that God would be with him wherever he went:

*Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go,  
and will bring you back to this land  
for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you.*

3.6.28 From such situations there derive biblical understanding of God's personhood through personal address, God's omnipresence and God's covenant making and keeping faithfulness. The true, living God rules all of nature. He is not, as the pagan gods were thought to be, limited to one jurisdiction, tribe or nation.

3.6.29 In *Exodus* 3:6 God again identifies himself, this time to Moses in the wilderness, a most unlikely place: *I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*. Commissioning follows: *come, I will send you* (3:10); along with God's promise of never-failing presence: *but I will be with you* (3:12). Ever after, throughout the tortuous wilderness journey Moses was assured of God's presence.

3.6.30 The truth about God's universal presence, wisdom and power is developed more fully and distinctively by the prophets. They prompt memory of God's presence during the Exodus and the wilderness journey. They teach Israel that God cannot be contained in a man-made religious house, even a grand temple (*1 Kings* 8:27; *Isaiah* 66:1). He who fills all the earth knows about each individual human being (*Jeremiah* 23:23-24). The prophets of Israel present us with full-orbed teaching about God's omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience.

3.6.31 The most complete Old Testament statements about God's greatness are contained in the *Psalms*. From Psalm to Psalm one finds expression of the soul's communion with God *on grounds of clear understanding* of God's omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. The soul communes with God who, as Creator, transcends nature. This is the foundation of personal confidence in him,

*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place  
in all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever thou hadst formed the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.  
Psalm 90:1-2*

3.6.32 Jesus declares that God is not restricted to religious shrines. He is present everywhere (*John* 4:24, note *Matthew* 18:20; 28:20). Where Jesus is, there God is, whether in his earthly, incarnate life or as the risen Lord.

3.6.33 Paul declares that God is not localized in shrines, nor is he dependent on the natural order which he created and sustains (*Acts* 17:24, 28). He is near at hand to everyone.

3.7.0

## The Love of God

3.7.1

### 1. The Concept of Love in Relation to God's Nature

3.7.2

That God is love is so widely assumed within Western Christendom that its previously long felt philosophical improbability is scarcely remembered. This question centers upon Idealist assumptions about God's impassibility: that which is perfect must in the nature of the case be passionless, the argument goes. For Christians, the Trinitarian nature of God coheres with the doctrine that God is personal and that love is at the heart of the life of the Godhead (*John* 17:24). Unipersonal or suprapersonal conceptions of God are forced to deconstruct or to demythologize love as being not the essential nature of God but a divinely inspired dynamic of human existence. Modern theology reflects this approach, particularly in the pantheism of Paul Tillich and in Process Theology. They capitalize on ambiguity as to what *God is love* means, or else ignore the coherence issue.

3.7.3

In his dialogues, **Plato** is at pains to frequently discuss love. Love is a mighty god, the eldest god, the son of Aphrodite (*Symposium* 178). Prophecy and love are forms of madness, but of a noble sort (*Phaedrus* 255): *there is also a madness which is a divine gift*. In its highest sense, love is the aspiration of the soaring soul; it is *love for love lodging in his breast* (*Phaedrus* 255).

3.7.4

Therein lies a problem regarding the impassibility of God or of the Good. Plato's solution appears to be that God, as Father and Artificer, gives creation over to lesser gods, apparently to shield the impassibility of the absolute divine principle. How can God love, for love implies passibility? Two axioms emerge from his theological discussion (*Republic* II, 382-3): a) God is perfect and unchangeable; and, b) God is true and the author of truth: *God is perfectly simple and true in word and deed; he changes not; he deceives not, either by sign or word, by dream or waking vision*. Conclusion: love is the soaring of the soul on the wing of love, pulling the soul to vision of the divine. Love is in us, not in God.

3.7.5

While **Aristotle** says that God is a living being (*Metaphysics* 1073a9), he must shelter God's eternal existence from change: *it is impossible for God to be jealous*, he says (983a13). God is the causative factor in the universe, the supreme cause, but not in the sense of acting for he is himself exempt from all mutability. Impassibility precludes love. God himself is uncaused (1059a4). He is the Prime Mover: *For there is something which always moves that which is moved, and the Prime Mover is itself unmoved*. How, then, does he act? It is activity by immobility. He is the unchanging source of change; change which comes about by attraction, by the appetites for fulfillment of finite entities from potentiality to actuality. This is a far cry from biblical teaching about God as Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer, the God who is Love and who acts in history.

3.7.6

The issue of impassibility and love in the nature of God is further complicated terminologically (the following notes parallel my essays *Agape* and *Love* in the *Encyclopedia of Biblical and Christian Ethics*, 1987). The several Greek words for love bring to focus the foregoing conceptual issues.

3.7.7

The two most widely used words for love in the New Testament along with their cognates are *agape* and *philos*. The term *eros*, which was historically the common word for love in Greek along with *philos*, does not occur in the NT. The question about the lexical origin and meaning of *agape* and the significance of the absence of *eros* from the New Testament have evoked vigorous discussion and conflicting scholarly opinion. Some have argued that *agape* is a providentially initiated and preserved term uniquely suitable to express divine love. Others have argued that *eros* was excluded from the New Testament because of its traditional sexual overtones. Still others maintain that the uses

or non-uses of these terms are simply either historical accidents or the natural consequences of the evolution of language and that no term lexically is more spiritual or theological than any other.

- 3.7.8 The translators of the Septuagint, which is the pre-Christian era translation of the Old Testament into Greek, did not make such fine distinctions. They commonly use *agape* and its cognates for sexual love (*Song of Solomon* 2:4-5, 7; 5:8; 8:6) and *eros* and *philos* synonymously for the same (*Proverbs* 7:18). In *Psalms* 109:5 and *Hosea* 11:4 *agape* identifies human affection and loyalty and in *Habakkuk* 3:4 admiration for might. Plato uses a form of *agape* to describe the love of a wolf for a lamb (*Phaedrus* 241d), which does not fit the exclusively spiritual connotations attached by some to *agape*.
- 3.7.9 Whether the absence of *eros* from the NT is a conscious omission is a matter of dispute. Its sexual overtones are clearly not the meaning for love which most NT references require. Some believe as well that its classical use for aspiration to the divine is not consistent with Christian spiritual aspiration or the meaning of grace. *Philos* is employed commonly for human affection, including the kiss of greeting. While earlier uses of the *agape* group embrace the normal range of human affection in the Septuagint, the total absence of *agape* from non-biblical texts is puzzling. Only one occurrence has been cited and the broken state of the text has drawn vigorous denial that the occurrence is in fact *agape*. It would appear that *agape* was picked up in Christian vocabulary, perhaps from the Septuagint, as the ordinary word for love and that it and its older synonym *philos* were used interchangeably (*John* 21:15, 17). *Agape*, meaning love with the added dimension of being other-regarding, dominated use for redemptive love and Christian interpersonal love.
- 3.7.10 In the NT *agape* is used for the highest form of love, including: God's love to humanity (*John* 3:16; *Romans* 5:8); God's love to Christ (*John* 15:9; 17:23, 26); Christ's love for human beings (*John* 15:9; *Galatians* 2:20; *Ephesians* 2:4); human love for God and Christ (*John* 14:23-24; *1 John* 2:5); human love to one another (*John* 13:35; *1 John* 3:14; 4:20). Notably, John and Paul use this word extensively in a natural and unforced way to express the truth about God's relationship to human beings, theirs to God and the best interpersonal relationships among human beings.
- 3.7.11 The single and most important characteristic of the love which *agape* identifies has to do with persons and personal relationships and the ethics of those relationships. This is crucial with respect to the biblical teaching about God, the world and redemption.
- 3.7.12 First, in the Bible **love is not God's way to the world ontologically**. Regarding the nature of God, various forms of ancient and modern demythologizing reconstruct the interpersonal nature of love. To say that God is love or that God loves is thought to jeopardize the impassibility or simplicity of God's nature, which seemed unappealing to Plato. The ancient Gnostics theorized that the world is the product of the overflow of the divine essence or that the world derives from emanations descending from the primordial impassible divine principle. Desire enters only well down the scale in relation to the material, evil-infected world.
- 3.7.13 Second, **neither is love the world's way to God**. This was the role of *eros* in various Greek philosophical traditions. Humanity aspires to the beatific vision, to mystical union with the divine; hence the traditions which advocate the pursuit of absolute beauty or absolute truth through ecstatic flight of the soul. Paul Tillich, for example, denies that God personally loves. Tillich says that love is aspiration or drive to unity. Love is that attracting and impelling power which moves us toward reunion with God, which he defines as full actualization of individual life in a social context. While the concept of aspiration lends credence to the attracting power of transcendental ideals it misses the active, gracious, other-regarding character of God's love.

- 3.7.14                    Third, **nor is love humanity's way to itself**, though healing and reintegrating sin-broken persons is certainly a function of love. Love is not to be redefined to signify purely human personality dynamics and relationships. The final stage of contemporary demythologizing does precisely this. Some argue that to say that God is love is too anthropomorphic; rather, that God is love means that I believe in pure personal relationships or that I feel good about myself. In other words the being of God and the love of God become functions of human nature and human relationships, not attributes of the God who creates, cares, loves and redeems.
- 3.7.15                    **2. God is Love**
- 3.7.16                    In the Old Testament God's love (*ahab*) embraces a wide range of meanings: affection, provision, mercy, care, redemption. These aspects show that God's love is personal, benevolent, saving and moral. God's love is spontaneous, condescending and electing. He loves individuals such as Abraham and David (*1 Samuel* 13:14; *Isaiah* 41:8), those who trust him (*Psalms* 60:5) and his beloved Israel (*Isaiah* 63:9; *Jeremiah* 31:3). God's love places upon men the burden of loving obedience as their proper response to God's love (*Deuteronomy* 4:37, 40; 7:12-13). God's covenant with Israel is a mark of electing grace. The text of the covenant is as much an essay on reciprocal love (*Deuteronomy* 10:12-22) as it is a contract involving commitments and sanctions (*Deuteronomy* 11:26-28). Hosea's message is particularly poignant: God loves Israel still even though she has played the harlot spiritually and his enduring love will finally bring her back to himself. God loves not only Israel; his love is universal (*Deuteronomy* 33:3; *Isaiah* 42:4-7). Ruth the Gentile was brought into covenant relationship. Jonah was commissioned to preach grace to Ninevah. As well as judging Egypt, God cared for Egypt (*Isaiah* 19:19-25).
- 3.7.17                    The Old Testament is replete with terms which are synonymous with love and convey the truth about God's benevolence: loving-kindness (*Deuteronomy* 5:10); mercy (*Psalms* 25:6); faithfulness (*Lamentations* 3:23); graciousness (*Psalms* 9:13). Many metaphors and images reinforce the truth about God's love: he cares for his children as a vinedresser cares for a vineyard, a shepherd his sheep, a physician the sick. Above all, God cares for humanity as a father lovingly cares for his own child (*Psalms* 103:13).
- 3.7.18                    Nevertheless, the New Testament discloses the fuller meaning of God's love. The main terms employed for love are *phileo* and *agape*. The term *phileo* and its cognates are used chiefly for a cherished loving relationship. For example, the love of Jesus for Lazarus (*John* 11:3, 36), the father's love for the son (*John* 5:20), God's love to men (*John* 16:27), Christian love for Christ (*1 Corinthians* 16:22).
- 3.7.19                    *Agape* dominates NT theological and ethical use. Love originates within the Godhead (*John* 14:31; 17:26). God loves men savingly in Christ (*Romans* 8:37; *Ephesians* 2:4; *1 John* 3:1, 16). It is humanity's duty to love God (*Matthew* 22:37; *1 John* 4:19). Love to Christ is the crux of true discipleship (*Ephesians* 6:24; *1 Peter* 1:8). Love is fundamental to Christian personal relationships (*John* 13:34; *1 Peter* 1:22; *1 John* 3:11, 21).
- 3.7.20                    Love is the essence of God's nature. This truth controls our understanding of true love. John says **God is love** (*1 John* 4:8, 16), which means more than that God is loving, that he loves humanity or, existentially speaking, that humans reflect divinity through their love for one another. It means that as the living God his inmost nature is love. In the Bible, far from protecting God from attribution of love to his nature in order to shield his impassibility, both testaments of Scripture freely declare that God is love and that he loves. There is no higher metaphysical reality than personhood. God is personal and he loves personally. He is the subject of the act of loving. On this text C. H. Dodd helpfully comments, *if the characteristic divine activity is that of loving, then God*

*must be personal, for we cannot be loved by an abstraction, or by anything else less than a person.*

3.7.21 This truth makes the full range of Christian teaching coherent: God is triune, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and love is the essence of the divine interpersonal relations (*John 17:23*). God deals with humanity redemptively through his love (*I John 4:10*). As a consequence, love becomes the sphere of the Christian life (*John 15:9*) and this mode of God's dealing with us becomes the pattern of our own relationships with one another (*I John 4:16-21*).

3.7.22 God's love is the key-feature of the New Testament. Jesus Christ is the gift of the Father's love. He personally and authentically manifests God's true nature as being love. The context of the Apostle's word that *God is love* beautifully conveys the salvific nature of divine love (*I John 4:7-11, 16, 19*; I am substituting the more correct term propitiation for expiation):

*Beloved, let us love one another  
for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.  
He who does not love does not know God  
for God is love.  
In this the love of God was made manifest among us  
that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.  
In this is love,  
not that we loved God but that he loved us  
and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.  
Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.  
So we know and believe the love God has for us.  
God is love,  
and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.  
We love, because he first loved us.*

3.7.23 **3. God's Love is Holy Love**

3.7.24 It is remarkable that in many theological treatises love and holiness are abstracted from one another. This is not the case in the Scriptures. The result is that in Calvinist-oriented and Lutheran-oriented theology prominence is given to holiness and righteousness. In more romantic or sentimental forms of theology love of a certain kind predominates, but often at the expense of righteousness. In the Scriptures God's holiness and righteousness are never merely juridical abstractions. They are *always providentially tinged by grace*, except for the final wrath of God. Holiness qualifies the nature of love. Love qualifies the nature of holiness. In the Scriptures God's love is Holy Love. That is the meaning of grace. God's love is extended to sinners not around, over, or under holiness, but through holiness. It is not simply that the divine holiness and love complement one another; rather, the meaning of each is embedded in the meaning of the other. Neither stands alone, whether in grace or in judgment.

3.7.25 Holiness safeguards God's transcendence. This is its primary Scriptural meaning. Holiness is God's separateness, his uniqueness. He is *High and lifted up* (*Isaiah 6:1*), and incomparable (*Isaiah 44:6-8*). He dwells in unapproachable light (*I Timothy 6:16*).

3.7.26 As well, holiness signifies God's moral perfection, which is our usual use of the term. God's holy nature does not mean that he is detached in such manner that holiness conveys the impasse of a religious taboo. He personally is the Holy One of Israel, in whose presence we become painfully aware of our twisted character: *They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel.* (*Isaiah 1:4*). He is the Holy Father of our Lord's prayer (*John 17:11*). His moral perfection and Christ's are identical.

3.7.27 Holiness rebukes sin. The Lord God is a jealous God (*Exodus 20:5; Isaiah 42:8*), which means that in the loving interests of his people he brooks no impostor. He is jealous for their good. When they see themselves in his clear, bright light, conscience no longer relativizes, they are compelled out of deep conviction to pray, *I am a man of unclean lips (Isaiah 6:3, 5)*. Holiness hones separation due to sin into its sharp, uncomfortable moral edge (*Isaiah 59:2*).

3.7.28 Holiness indicts sin. The holy God is just. He will not excuse the guilty (*Romans 3:19*). He is just, he cannot be bribed (*Deuteronomy 10:17; Romans 2:2-6*). Freedom and punishment are correlatives; personhood and responsibility are mutual implicates. It is the function of God's holiness to make this clear.

3.7.29 Holiness and love combine in judgment. God hallows and judges what he loves (*Jeremiah 12:7*)

*I have forsaken my house,  
I have abandoned my heritage;  
I have given the beloved of my soul  
into the hands of her enemies.*

3.7.30 In the Scriptures God's holiness and righteousness are never purely rectoral. His judgment is not merely to give every person his or her due, though finally the impenitent will be judged. His righteousness is *more* than sheer justice. True righteousness must *exceed* that of mere legalism, Jesus said of the cold, calculating, legalistic righteousness of the Pharisees (*Matthew 5:20*). Through grace the Holy Father not only judges, he bears the judgment in Christ. He is *both* just and justifier. This is holiness which goes beyond law (*Romans 3:21*), although thereby righteousness is met and satisfied. Without holiness, love is mere sentiment. They combine in God's holy redemptive purposes. Note the relation of love to righteousness in the following (*Isaiah 45:21*):

*Who told this long ago?  
Who declared it of old?  
Was it not I, the Lord?  
And there is no other god besides me,  
a righteous God and a Savior;  
there is none besides me.*

3.7.31 **4. God's Love is Redeeming Love**

3.7.32 In the Old Testament, the direct equivalent of the New Testament doctrine of grace, particularly with regard to the writings of the Apostle Paul, is the doctrine of God's loving-kindness. No one should suppose that because the term grace does not appear in great numbers in English translations of the Old Testament that the doctrine of grace is not there. This view is a leftover of the discredited claim that in the Old Testament God is a God of judgment but in the New Testament a God of grace. Many Hebrew terms convey central features of what grace means. This may be illustrated from usages of the Septuagint translators who utilize *charis* (grace) to render at least eight Hebrew terms. Parallel to this is that, while the Gospel writers do not utilize *charis* frequently, and it does not occur in the reported sayings of Jesus, that therefore grace is absent from the Gospels. James Denney dispelled that myth a long time ago in his study of the Work of Christ in the Gospels. Paul did not invent the doctrine of grace; he reflects the historical reality that *the Word dwelt among us, full of grace and truth (John 1:14, 16, 17)*. The historical presence of Christ, his teachings and works of mercy, are grace present and acting.

3.7.33 Amos and Hosea exemplify the two sides of God's holiness in his personal relations with Israel. Amos announces the impartial judgment of God not only against the atrocities committed by nations surrounding Israel, but also against Israel and Judah's own religious perversions and social injustice. It is justice nuanced with grace, as the last verses of his prophecy show. Hosea mourns the infidelity of the nation, which he likens to a faithless wife, whom God will not let go but will woo back to himself following punishment and spiritual renewal.

3.7.34 God's judgments vindicate his righteousness. They are also associated with compassion, deliverance and restoration. Righteousness and redemption belong together. Consider this correlation in the following (*Isaiah* 63:7-9):

*I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord,  
the praises of the Lord,  
according to all that the Lord has granted us,  
and the great goodness to the house of Israel  
which he has granted them according to his mercy,  
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.  
For, he said, Surely they are my people  
sons who will not deal falsely;  
and he became their Savior.  
In all their affliction he was afflicted,  
and the angel of his presence saved them;  
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.*

3.7.35 Many different terms in the Old Testament identify the many-sided reality of God's goodness.

3.7.36 The term *rachamin* expresses God's deep feelings of concern for his people. Despite Israel's rebellion, says Nehemiah, *thou art a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and didst not forsake them* (*Nehemiah* 9:27). The pathos of *Psalms* 25:6 is deeply moving (note also *Psalms* 119:156 where justice and mercy are correlatives; and *Daniel* 9:9):

*Be mindful of thy mercy, O Lord,  
and of thy steadfast love,  
for they have been from of old.*

3.7.37 *Kaphar* signifies the action of grace to cover sin, to pardon, to purge, to make reconciliation (*Leviticus* 16:20; *Deuteronomy* 21:8). In addition, many metaphors and images highlight God's tender care: Like a father (*Exodus* 4:22). Like a healing physician or the refreshing dew (*Hosea* 14:4-5). Like the love of a bridegroom for his bride (*Jeremiah* 2:1-2). Like a shepherd and his sheep (*Psalms* 80:1).

3.7.38 God's long-suffering, his unmerited suffering, for his people is most strikingly expressed by the term *hesedh*, which is translated as goodness, mercy, pity, but most often as kindness and longing-kindness. *Psalms* 103 was composed in praise of God's loving-kindness (vs. 4, 8, 11, 17), especially the heartfelt phrase *steadfast love*. David prays, *Wondrously show thy steadfast love* (*Psalms* 17:7); and, *Be mindful of thy mercy, O Lord, and of thy steadfast love* (*Psalms* 25:6). God's unswerving love sustained the nation throughout its turbulent history (*Deuteronomy* 7:9-12).

3.7.39 Characteristic Old Testament teaching about God's long-suffering, steadfast love is expressed in the doctrine of God's grace (*charis*), his unmerited favor, in the New Testament. It is a fundamental category of Biblical theology: *the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men*, says Paul (*Titus* 2:11). Grace centers in the Cross, where mercy and justice meet (*Romans* 3:21-25). Grace is spontaneous, free, generous

and abiding. It is God's grace, the action of love on behalf of sinful, alienated humanity. *He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows* (Isaiah 53:4). Herein lies the key to comprehending the significance of God's Holy Love.

3.7.40 **5. God's Holy Love is Restoring and Healing Love**

3.7.41 God redeems and delivers by means of, on terms of, his Holy Love. He ransomed Israel from Egypt (*Exodus* 20:2; *Deuteronomy* 7:8, and from Babylon (*Isaiah* 51:11). Real, historical deliverance is, as well, proleptic of God's merciful deliverance of humanity from the captivity of sin (*1 Peter* 2:9-10), from just judgment (*Romans* 3:24-26), from the powers of evil (*Ephesians* 6:12), all of which look toward cosmic redemption (*Romans* 8:21-23; *Colossians* 1:19-20). It is, as Paul says in the foregoing passage in *Romans*, *redemption through grace as a gift; redemption which is in Christ Jesus*.

3.7.42 Through his Holy Love, God reconciles and restores. Christ's condescending grace offers restoration as the solution to human alienation from God. Paul says that *reconciled to God by the death of his Son we shall be saved by his life* (*Romans* 5:20). Restoration opens the door to fulfillment of the Spirit-bearing humanity of Christ in us. Return makes possible renewal (*Ephesians* 2:14).

3.7.43 Finally, through his Holy Love, God forgives and heals. Forgiveness is ever costly. Sin is forgiven as it is borne. This is the action of loving grace in the Cross. That the Suffering Servant of *Isaiah* 53 (note vs. 5, 6) is the Son of Man who comes to seek and to save the lost of *Mark* 10:45, is the key feature of the Christian paradigm, which unlocks the treasures of both Old and New Testament and addresses the true condition of humanity. The Cross is the final action of Holy Love,

*But he was wounded for our transgressions,  
he was bruised for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,  
and with his stripes we are healed.  
All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned every one to his own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

3.7.44 Nothing beats awareness that one is a forgiven sinner. The only appropriate human response to grace is faith - faith which penitently and gratefully receives the gift of Holy Love.

3.8.0 **The Faithfulness of God**

3.8.1 **1. God is Faithful**

3.8.2 God allows integrity to the other. This is absolutely fundamental to the Biblical concept of God's faithfulness. Otherwise, if everything is perfectly predisposed in the mind of God, as most Idealist systems hold or imply, then the concept of divine faithfulness is an irrelevance. God grants independence to moral creatures which *can* degenerate into chaos. God also purposes to save his world, but he saves it within the freedom of his grace which means for freedom. Also, as the faithful Creator, God endows the universe with the gift of reliability, not mechanical rigidity. The creation paradigm gives full credence to God's faithfulness, unlike either the Idealist or Materialist paradigms where even the question is otiose.

3.8.3 Anything Christians say about providence must take into account that the scientific dependability of the world is God's ordering and gift. Christians are mistaken to denigrate the world which God has made. The pagan notion of jurisdictional disputes among gods is silly. The doctrine of creation universalizes cosmic dependability. This is a critical factor in any discussion of a rationale for intercessory prayer.

3.8.4 From a reading of *Psalms* 103, among many other Scriptures, one finds the faithfulness of God in his providential dealings powerfully affirmed. Divine faithfulness is an axiom of faith. Faithfulness is based upon God's eternity, his perfection and unchangeableness. This is expressed variously.

3.8.5 He is the true God who cannot be false, *the Lord is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King (Jeremiah 10:10)*.

3.8.6 His word is true and dependable. *Psalms* 119 is written in praise of the steadfastness of God's word and laws: *for ever, O Lord, thy word is firmly fixed in the heavens, thy faithfulness endures to all generations* (v. 89) The same theme pervades New Testament teaching, as when Paul remarks that *if we are faithless, he remains faithful (2 Timothy 2:13)*. The faithful word of God of the Old Testament is replicated in the faithful word of the Gospel in the New Testament: *the saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15)*.

3.8.7 God keeps covenant. He is *the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments (Deuteronomy 7:9)*. He cannot swear an oath of commitment by anyone higher than himself, for he is the living, faithful Creator (*Hebrews 6:16*). This truth, adds the writer, is grounds for life in hope.

3.8.8 God's Faithfulness, Fatherhood and Lordship intertwine. He will see his gracious purposes through to their end (*Matthew 11:26-27; Ephesians 1:11*).

## 3.8.9 **2. God is Faithful in His Providence**

3.8.10 Providence extends the meaning of God's Lordship and Fatherhood to the creation and to human life. Rain falls on the unjust as well as on the just (*Matthew 5:45*). He clothes the meadow with grass and cares for the lilies of the fields. Why, then, should humans doubt his providential care? (*Matthew 7:25-30*).

3.8.11 Belief in God's providence accepts that God can, and that he has, intervened in human affairs to shape the course of history. During my lifetime I have witnessed kingdoms rise and fall, and men of evil come to power and then self-destruct. One marvels at God's providence in history. However, the assumption that the sign of providence is a change for the better is an error, whether it concerns the affairs of humanity or issues of personal life. God led Israel through the wilderness, but this did not mean an improvement in their lives. They complained to Moses (*Exodus 14:11*), "weren't there enough graves in Egypt that we have to die here?" And die they did. In any wilderness experience God's providence may appear bleak or be obscured, but suffering may be a part of his purpose. It is well to recall (*2 Corinthians 12:9*) that it is in the context of God's No! to Paul's intercession for relief that God said,

*My grace is sufficient for you,  
for my power is made perfect in weakness.*

3.8.12 God faithfully attends to the spiritual needs of his children. We may cooperate with him in connection with his providential care, which becomes the stuff of spiritual growth and enlarged understanding. Our freedom can be consistent with his, and with his Lordship, as *workers together (2 Corinthians 6:1)*

3.8.13 His actions and our actions can and do make a difference to outcomes. This should be seen as consistent with God's providence. Things *can* go this way or that depending upon the choices of a moral being. Thus, it is likely that Joseph would not have been able to say that God *sent me before you (Genesis 45:7)* upon disclosing himself to his malicious brothers if earlier he had not said no to Potiphar's wife when she

attempted to seduce him. Actions do have consequences in a providentially ordered world.

3.8.14 Intercessory prayer is consistent with the creation model and with God's providential oversight of a dependable world order. Prayer can affect the course of things. If the stability of the world order allows for one mode of change, there is an additional mode, which is implementation of conscious intelligent purpose. Leonard Hodgson remarked that Christians believe God can control the creation through his providence, which includes both scientific dependability and intelligent purpose, without either disorganizing his world or inhibiting our freedom. There is a difference between superstition and Christian maturity as to the uses of intercessory prayer.

3.8.15 Why pray? Do we have a right morally to meddle by means of intercessory prayer in other people's lives, even when we believe intercession is for a benign purpose? We pray because we do not know outcomes and are prepared to leave them in God's hands. We pray that right use be made of life's occasions, and right decisions be made in seasons of uncertainty. We pray because, at times, God wills to let outcomes depend upon our asking and upon our choices because he limits his freedom by the area of ours and we are seeking to do his will. We pray that we may become true co-workers with God knowing more and more what we are doing, which means to know more clearly the consequences of our choices and actions.

3.8.16 **3. God is Faithful in His Redeeming Purpose**

3.8.17 God's faithfulness is expressed in his compassion for a hurting world and for suffering humanity. The Gospel is for Everyman - for every living man, woman and child: *Comfort, Comfort my people, says your God (Isaiah 40:1)*.

*Ho, everyone who thirsts  
come to the waters;  
and he who has no money  
come buy and eat!*

*Isaiah 55:1*

3.8.18 Such a mission has for its foundation sure hope in God's faithfulness. Those who sow in tears may well reap with joy (*Psalms 126:5*). But confidence in God's faithfulness does not turn on perceived success of the moment. At times in God's providence there may be injected what appear to be interminable delays, and agonizing, unaccountable, events. Here the child of God says, even if through tears, "though he take away the dearest thing or person in my life, every prop, yet will I trust him."

3.8.19 At the end, God is faithful to make the calling and election of his children sure: *he who calls you is faithful, and he will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24)*. God's faithfulness is the rock upon which to stand. It is the canvas which forms the backdrop on which is painted the detail of life. Its beauty is apparent at the end, not always in the process of its creation.

# THE HOLY SPIRIT

Samuel J. Mikolaski

## OUTLINE

- 4.0.1 **Definition**
- 4.1.1 **Major Old Testament Themes**
  - 4.1.2 **Creation**
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### 4.0.1 **Definition**

- 4.0.2 The name *Spirit of God* identifies God himself present in all of his creation, and present to all rational beings as self-evidently the creator, life-giver and sustainer of the universe.
- 4.0.3 The title *Holy Spirit* identifies the same transcendent creator, life-giver and sustainer as holy and righteous. As the indwelling spirit of holiness he is the initiator in us of the desire for holiness.
- 4.0.4 In both the Old Testament and the New Testament spirit denotes the impalpable divine nature: spirit in contrast to matter. This transcends the distinction between that which is empirically verifiable and that which is not.
- 4.0.5 The terms for spirit (Hebrew: *ruach*; and Greek: *pneuma*) denote wind, breath and, derivatively, life or spiritual reality. H. Wheeler Robinson summarizes the consensus among scholars that early uses of spirit in the Old Testament mean the active power, or invasive force, of God (H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*. London, 1930, p. 3):
- 4.0.6 *The primitive and fundamental idea of spirit (ruach) in the Old Testament is that of active power or energy (energeia, not dynamis), power superhuman, mysterious, elusive, of which the ruach or wind of the desert was not so much the symbol as the familiar example.*
- 4.0.7 A sampling of the Old Testament data shows how diverse the uses of spirit (*ruach*) are: wind (*Genesis* 8:1; *Exodus* 10:13, 19); breath (*Job* 9:18; 15:30; 27:3); odor

(*Genesis* 8:21; 27:27); space (*Genesis* 32:16; *Job* 41:16); consciousness, the emotions (*Genesis* 45:27; *Exodus* 6:9; *Numbers* 5:14, 30; *Judges* 15:19; *1 Samuel* 30:12); divinely implanted principle of life (*Numbers* 16:22; *Job* 33:4; 34:15-15); angelic or otherworldly beings (*Job* 4:15; *Psalms* 104:4, note *Hebrews* 1:7); evil spirits (*Judges* 9:23; *1 Samuel* 16:15-16; spirits of beasts (*Ecclesiastes* 3:21; 12:7); heart stirred to spiritual response (*Exodus* 35:21); emptiness of vanity (*Isaiah* 26:18).

4.0.8 Crucial to this understanding is that spirit represents invasive not merely pervasive power nor merely power by attraction, though these are aspects of such understanding.

4.0.9 Biblical understanding of the identity and nature of the Holy Spirit extends beyond invasive force or life-giving energy to encompass characteristics of personhood, including divine intentional activity. Confessionally, Christians must contrast their understanding with concepts which define the Spirit of God in purely dynamic and immanent terms.

4.0.10 The logic of that which is spirit in contrast to that which is matter is identical with the logic of the contrast between personhood and a purely behavioral definition of human nature and purely materialistic definition of reality. Spirit and personhood are synonymous terms.

4.0.11 Biblically understood, human beings are each a spirit. This is fundamentally the meaning of the image of God in human nature. What personhood means in regard to the Holy Trinity will occupy our attention in the chapter on the Trinity but, in short, the conclusion one must come to is that God is not a person; there are persons in God.

4.0.12 Spirit identifies the essential nature of God and in this respect is parallel to the declaration of Jesus that *God is spirit* (*John* 4:24). The divine power of God's Spirit is contrasted with creaturely fleshly strength (*Isaiah* 31:3). In three crucial passages God's Spirit is identified as the Holy Spirit, which focuses attention upon the holiness-impelling qualities of the Spirit's power (*Psalms* 51:11; *Isaiah* 63:10-11). The term *Spirit of God* means that God is the living God who gives breath to every creature, as against lifeless idols (*Jeremiah* 10:14; 51:17; *Habakkuk* 2:18-19).

#### 4.1.1 **Major Old Testament Themes**

##### **Creation**

4.1.2 God by his Spirit is the creator of all things, in the absolute sense of *ex nihilo*: creation of that which did not previously exist, not simply re-working eternally existing matter. *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth* (*Genesis* 1:1) is axiomatic. Thereupon, *the Spirit of God moved (was brooding) upon the face of the waters* (*Genesis* 1:2). Entailed are inception, dominion and life-giving. *He is the God of the spirits of all flesh* (*Numbers* 16:22). He is the creator of the heavens and the earth who gives breath to all who inhabit the earth (*Genesis* 2:7; *Isaiah* 42:5; 44:24, note *Zechariah* 12:1). The Spirit of God is the divine purposive intelligence that begets us.

##### **Providence**

4.1.3 Linked to the theme of creation, under the rubric of dominion, is God's providential oversight of the world. This comprises not only life-sustaining divine energy but, in addition, God's personal, relational concern and care for the world and its creatures. The Psalmist prays to be led on level, not rough, ground (*Psalms* 143:10), and in paths of God's truth (*Psalms* 25:4-5). A turning point of understanding regarding God's universal providence was Jacob's startled awareness that God was not localized in the shrine of his father's house, but was equally present in the 'God-forsaken' wilderness

where Jacob had slept among the rocks (*Genesis* 28:10-22). To the Psalmist, God's concern for humanity is a source of wonder (*Psalms* 8:3-4). Ultimately, God himself, not armies or strategy, is our refuge and strength (*Psalms* 46). To God's people of all ages, *Psalms* 23 has been the cornerstone of understanding about his loving care: *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*

### **Inspiration**

- 4.1.4 In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God is the discloser, the revealer of God's presence and of his purposes. The anointing of David as king to displace Saul is accompanied by the coming upon him of the Spirit of God without which, we may infer, the ceremonial anointing would be meaningless (*1 Samuel* 16:13). The Old Testament historians extend this theme as the key feature of David's leadership and of his hymnody: *The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me, his word is upon my tongue* (*2 Samuel* 23:2).
- 4.1.5 Spirit-borne inspiration embraces the insights and pronouncements of prophets, creativity, and gifts of leadership.
- 4.1.6 In regard to prophetic ministry, note Jahaziel (*2 Chronicles* 20:14-15); Zechariah (*2 Chronicles* 24:20), and Amos (where the terms prophet and seer occur together, *Amos* 7:14-17). The case of Balaam is instructive, not only for the prophetic inspiration he received by the Spirit of God (*Numbers* 24:1-3), but also for the Spirit-inspired rebuke (*Numbers* 22, especially v. 35).
- 4.1.7 The Spirit's role in prophetic ministry raises the difficult questions of emotional instability and induced states for purposes of ecstatic utterances which are then falsely deemed to be divinely generated. The problem is identified in *Hosea* 9:7-8 where it appears that some rejected legitimate prophetic pronouncements on grounds of the alleged manic behavior of the speaker when, in fact, the prophet was a watchman who was concerned about the well-being of God's people. To this day this remains an unresolved issue: how to test claims to divine inspiration as being authentic or merely induced or aberrant psychological states. How the schools of the prophets as in the Elijah/Elisha stories (*2 Kings* 2:3, 5, 7, 15) functioned in regard to legitimate inspiration as against induced psychological states is uncertain in the present state of our knowledge. Were there prophetic guilds? It appears to be the case (*2 Kings* 4:38; 6:1-2). How did they function, what training did they offer, and what practices did they foster? Our knowledge is fragmentary.
- 4.1.8 The writer in *Isaiah* 29:10 and in 30:9-10 correlates the function of prophet and seer, though their respective roles are not distinguished.
- 4.1.9 Samuel had links to guilds of prophets (*1 Samuel* 9; 10:5-6) among whom ecstatic states appear to have been common practice (*1 Samuel* 19:18-24).
- 4.1.10 Did early distinctions relate the term seer to insight and prophet to ecstatic practices, and later substitutions of the term prophet convey a drift away from ecstasy to insight?
- 4.1.11 Israelite prophetism rejected Canaanitish practices which aimed to cajole gods into action, as in the case of the Baal prophets at Carmel. The prophets in Israel claimed to convey the Word of the Lord, in regard to which psychological states do not appear to have been the controlling factor. The initiative was understood to be God's, not human wheedling to elicit divine response by means of ritualistic practices. Nevertheless, the relation of the rational to the irrational in Canaanitish and Israelite prophetic traditions is not well understood.

### **Renewal**

4.1.12 Conviction of sin and the call to holiness are important factors of the Spirit's ministry in the Old Testament, to the nation and to individuals.

4.1.13 Though they are sinful, God intends that his people should have new hearts and new spirits (*Ezekiel* 11:19; 36:26-27). Individually, the Spirit convicts of sin and moves the heart to long for righteousness, as the confessions and longings of *Psalms* 51:10-12 and *Psalms* 139:7 show.

4.1.14 Landmark prophetic passages which highlight the foregoing include *Isaiah* 1-2 with their call for penitence and cleansing, leading to the climax of *Isaiah* 6 where the vision of God as exalted and holy elicits the prophet's cry for inner holiness and spiritual renewal of the nation.

4.1.15 Patterns for spiritual renewal are evident, for example in *Psalms* 106, from which a parallel can be drawn with modern sociological studies of national decline and renewal such as that of Petirim Sorokin. Six stages are discernible in this psalm: First, apostasy and failure (*they served their idols, which became a snare to them*, v.36). Second, Crisis of discovery and indictment (*then the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people, and he abhorred his heritage*, v.40). Third, fiery ordeal (*and he gave them into the hand of the nations, so that those who hated them ruled over them*, v.41). Fourth, conviction, confession and purging (*nevertheless he regarded their distress when he heard their cry*, v.44). 5. Gifts of grace and new, spiritually-minded leaders (*he remembered for their sake his covenant, and relented according to his steadfast love*, v.45). Sixth, resurrection and restoration (*save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations*, v.47).

### **Communion**

4.1.16 The work of the Spirit involves not only recognition of God (*whither shall I flee from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?*, *Psalms* 139:7), but a drawing of the soul into communion with God. God himself (not merely acknowledgment of his mighty works) is our refuge and strength (*Psalms* 46:1). God's voice is heard in the stillness of the quiet moment (*be still and know that I am God*, *Psalms* 46:10). He is close at hand. As Paul declared to the Athenians, God is not far from any one of us (*Acts* 17:27). The distance between the soul and God is removed as sin is confessed, the heart is cleansed, and the soul restored to personal relationship with the Most High: *restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit* (*Psalms* 51:12).

### **Messianic Promise**

4.1.17 The promise of the coming Kingdom in the Old Testament is linked to individual and national renewal and focuses upon the Spirit-bearing character of the Messiah. Peter understands Pentecost as fulfillment of the promised Spirit's outpouring (*Joel* 2:28-29; *Acts* 2:17-18). This theme pervades prophecies such as those of *Ezekiel* (36:26-27; 37:1-6) and *Isaiah* (32:15; 44:2-3). The messianic nature of this promise and its fulfillment is crucial to grasping one of the key linkages Christians discern between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

4.1.18 The Messiah comes as Bearer of the Spirit (*Isaiah* 11:1-9). The promised Kingdom of God will arrive in his person and extend from his redeeming work to humanity and the world (*Isaiah* 42:1-4). That the messianic promise devolves upon himself as the fulfiller and transmitter is, to the mind of Jesus, the hinge of history and the dawning of the new age. Thus, at the outset of his ministry Jesus finds *Isaiah* 61:1-2 to read in the synagogue at Nazareth and then he announces: *today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing* (*Luke* 4:21).

4.1.19 The incarnate Lord is himself the bearer and giver of the Spirit. He is the primary sign of the Spirit's presence; Pentecost is the consequent sign. The promise of redemption through the Messiah included, and coincides with, the endowment of humanity by the Spirit in the new age, in the pattern of Christ's own Spirit-bearing humanity. The messianic promises were that God would be present among his people in a new way, that the Kingdom would include restoration of the broken created order, that his Spirit would be poured out upon all flesh, and that as a result his people would have new hearts, new vision, and new aspirations for holiness. All of this devolves upon the Messiah as himself the Spirit-bearer and Spirit-giver. Christ himself is the primary sign of the Kingdom's inception and proleptic presence, looking toward final fulfillment at the time of his triumphant return. The presence of Christ within the lives of his own is the 'foretaste' of that which is to come.

#### 4.2.1 **The Presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian**

4.2.2 I take up further development of the Holy Spirit as Christ-centered, including his Christ-centered presence in the life of each Christian, in the chapter on Christian Discipleship (note especially 9.4.0 - 9.4.22 and 9.6.0 - 9.6.41).

4.2.3 This multi-faceted concept includes: Faith-initiation into Christ by the Spirit, signified by baptism (which, in the New Testament, is the outward sign of baptism in the Spirit, *1 Corinthians* 12:13); the seal of the Spirit (which marks the Christian as belonging to Christ in virtue of the Spirit's generation of the Christian's new relationship with Christ, *Ephesians* 1:13-14; 4:30; *2 Corinthians* 5:5); and the indwelling of the Spirit (which signifies the permanent residence and life-transforming functions of the Spirit within the redeemed soul, *Romans* 5:5; 8:9-11; *1 Corinthians* 3:16; *2 Corinthians* 6:16; *2 Timothy* 1:14).

4.2.4 These interlocking concepts highlight the nature and development of the new reality, which is the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit within the heart of every believer in order to re-fashion that life into the image of Christ the primary Spirit-bearer.

4.2.5 Thus the orientation of the Holy Spirit is to magnify Christ, not himself. This is seen in the New Testament as the crowning fulfillment of the messianic promise and defines the essential nature of the Kingdom of God as *within you* (*Luke* 17:21).

4.2.6 Jesus Christ is the content of the Christian's life; the Holy Spirit is the power (in the sense of enabling presence) of that content. Lionel Thornton had it right: *Both Christ and the Spirit dwell in the Christian soul, but not in the same way. Christ is the indwelling content of the Christian life ... the Spirit is the quickening cause; and the indwelling of Christ is the effect of the quickening* (*The Incarnate Lord*, 1938, p. 322).

#### 4.3.1 **The Spirit, Nature and Creativity**

##### 4.3.2 **Creation and Providence**

4.3.3 An hiatus exists in modern evangelical theology as to understanding ongoing creativity in the natural order and the role of the Spirit of God in that process, as well as understanding more adequately the ministry of the Spirit in divine providence. That there is biological change in the natural order is indisputable. If, as is premised by all Christians, God by his Spirit is the creator and sustainer of all that exists, modern evangelicals have not given adequate attention to formulation of a scientifically as well as philosophically credible statement of divinely intended creativity in the natural order. The debate over evolution where evolution is defined in purely naturalistic terms has deflected attention away from the critical issue of the ongoing creative process.

##### 4.3.4 **Contemporary Process Theology**

- 4.3.5 Contemporary Process Theology has sought to furnish such a rationale. It is rooted chiefly in the metaphysics of A. N. Whitehead, though modern parallel examples include the work of Teilhard de Chardin who posited increasing evolutionary complexity which leads finally to consciousness, and the Panentheism of Paul Tillich. In each of these philosophies the nature and role of the Creator is not personal. It is either impersonal or transpersonal, as the source of that which is good, true and beautiful. The divine consists of a reservoir of values and options upon which the developing processes draw, but God is developing as part of the process as much as are its constituent elements.
- 4.3.6 Consider the perspective of A. N. Whitehead:
- 4.3.7 For Whitehead, reality consists of an organized system of what he designates *actual entities* or *actual occasions*, which, he says, are subjects or selves; they are *the final real things of which the world is made up* (*Process and Reality*. New York: Social Science Book Store, 1941, p. 27). There are also what he calls "eternal objects" which are the ideals, values, or abstract ideas of objects which are realized by the actual entities. He defines an eternal object as *any entity whose conceptual recognition does not involve a necessary reference to any definite actual entities of the temporal world* (p. 70). As subjects or selves, actual entities experience data or materials drawn from other actual entities at their demise by means of a process of prehension or feeling (p. 35). The prehension of an eternal object he calls a conceptual prehension and constitutes the mental pole of an actual entity; whereas, the prehension of the concrete data of another actual entity is known as a physical prehension and constitutes the physical pole of the actual entity. As guiding ideals the eternal objects govern the selection and absorption of a datum. Thus guided, the actual entity may prehend a datum positively or negatively (reject it) in accordance with a subjective aim that it has fashioned for itself from its prehension of particular eternal objects. This subjective aim is the ideal which the actual entity has selected for itself from the world of eternal objects, for it is a *causa sui* in this process. Its choice will determine its own nature, development, and character at the point of satisfaction. All actual entities endure for a finite period and at their death they *give out* concrete data for ingression into other actual entities.
- 4.3.8 However, Whitehead says that there is an important difference between the being of God as an actual entity and other actual entities. While it is in their passing away that actual entities provide concrete data for prehension by other actual entities, God abides. He does not pass away. As the store of values, he provides from himself data for prehension by other actual entities. This aspect of God's nature in virtue of which He provides data for others is called by Whitehead God's Superject Nature. But, God also has a conceptual and a physical pole like other actual entities, which Whitehead calls the primordial and consequent natures of God (p. 521, 523). Viewed as primordial, *God is the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality; He is the lure for feeling, the eternal urge of desire*. That is, in His primordial nature God provides in Himself the order or arrangement of eternal objects as ideal possibilities for prehension by actual entities. God arranges the eternal objects in ideal patterns and he desires that they be received by actual entities to perfect their possibilities; but He does not coerce, He persuades. However, God's consequent nature is his prehension physically of the concrete data of the evolving universe. Implied is that God is immanent and is continually developing. This is a core feature of the 'finite God theory.' Because of creative advance in the universe, the consequent nature of God is not complete (p. 523-524).
- 4.3.9 Important for our use here is: (1) the concept of teleological, valuing, free, actual entities; (2) the eternal objects as objects of value to actual entities; (3) the fact that God conserves the eternal objects in the arrangement of ideal possibilities for actual entities in himself; and (4) that God acts not coercively but persuasively. This is where

Christ as the eternal ideal fits into Whitehead's system: *the life of Christ is not an exhibition of over-ruling power. Its glory is for those who can discern it, and not for the world. Its power lies in its absence of force. It has the decisiveness of a supreme ideal, and that is why the history of the world divides at this point of time* (*Religion in the Making*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1930, p. 56-57).

4.3.10 Process theologians have identified the finite, developing God-concept with the cosmic, immanent life-principle and with love, which Jesus Christ exhibits. God becomes living, loving cosmic drive: the movement from potentiality to actuality as governed by eternal ideals. Or, to put the matter succinctly, the consummation of the process marks the actualization of Spirit.

#### 4.3.11 **Transcendence and Immanence**

4.3.12 There remains in these perspectives tension between immanence and transcendence, which Whitehead sets out in a series of unresolved antinomies (*Process and Reality*, p. 528).

4.3.13 While I hold that Process Theologies have dealt satisfactorily with neither God's personhood nor with his transcendence and aseity, they have nevertheless struggled to account for life and creativity in ways which reflect purpose, rather than the blind chance of the materialist option. Orthodox theology remains largely undeveloped on this question. A compelling modern perspective has not been furnished, though the potential for such theological development is inherent more in Eastern Orthodox theology with their concept of the Logos-pervaded world order than in modern Roman Catholic or Protestant perspectives.

4.3.14 Examples of evangelical attempts to furnish a rationale for on-going creativity and the relation of the creating Spirit to such a process can be cited from nineteenth and early twentieth century literature. But the polemics of the debate between evolution and creation inhibited substantial development of this theme.

4.3.15 Charles Hodge objected to evolution on grounds of its materialism. He argued that design had to be linked to an intelligent, purposeful creator (*What is Darwinism?* New York: Scribner's, 1874, pp. 48, 52; *Systematic Theology*, 3 volumes, 1872-73. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans reprint, 1946, 2.16). Nevertheless, change in nature was not deemed by early antagonists of evolution to be inconsistent with intelligent design or the work of a personal Creator of the world.

4.3.16 How God has implemented adaptive change in the natural order calls for further scientific study and philosophical formulation by evangelicals. B. B. Warfield, a late nineteenth and early twentieth century evangelical, was not unsympathetic to evolution. But he was content to leave open the question of *how* God brings about change in the world (*Lectures on Anthropology*, December 1888. Princeton University Library, as cited by David N. Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

4.3.17 From an orthodox perspective, a theology of ongoing creativity has yet to be written. What does *and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters* mean? (*Genesis* 1:1). Or, *let the earth bring forth living creatures ....?* (*Genesis* 1:24). Or, *when thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created* (*Psalms* 104:30)?

4.3.18 The logic of the Christian doctrine of creation combines faith in the transcendence and the omnipotence of God (his aseity) with his immanence. It is a logic which keeps God separate and distinct from the creation, involving him necessarily and universally in its maintenance, while insisting at the same time that this involvement is personal and purposeful, not impersonal. The figurativism of practical, finite analogies (such as God's *upholding, seeing, saying*), must not obscure the truth of the metaphysical

implicates. A central issue for Christians is how to correlate creation (in the absolute sense) and providence (with allowance for divine purposefulness and intervention through derivative causes). Christians affirm that God *rested* from his original creating activity (*Genesis* 2:2) but that nevertheless he *upholds* the universe by the word of his power (*Hebrews* 1:3).

4.3.19 **Divine Creative Action**

4.3.20 There appears to be a parallel between the thought of the Psalmist who says, *when thou sendest forth thy Spirit (breath) they are created (Psalm 104:30)* and the writer of *Hebrews* in the above-mentioned passage who declares that God by the creating word upholds the universe. This is especially the case if, as the vocabulary appears to allow, *upholds (phero)* in not a few contexts carries the force of *yielding, bearing, bringing forth, producing* (as in *Matthew* 7:38; *Mark* 4:8; *John* 12:24).

4.3.21 With regard to these issues I believe that the fundamental problem for Christian theology is how to state the ongoing creative relationship of the Spirit of God to the world in language which is both metaphysically credible and scientifically feasible, given our faith, whether theologians or scientists, that the world in all its wonders is open to our understanding. It cannot be said that God no longer creates, unless one restricts the use of the term univocally to initial, *ex nihilo* creation.

4.3.22 There is on-going creativity, or else we must invent a term to say the same thing about change in the world. Whatever we mean by saying that God *upholds* the world, it cannot mean stand-still maintenance; it must mean on-going *bringing forth* or, as the Psalmist beautifully expresses the matter, *when thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created.*

4.3.23 This calls for discussion of the nature of those deputies, or intermediaries (whether personal or impersonal) which serve as divine creative agents. Any confessional statement must couch this in language which conserves the reality of a dependable world order without resorting to deism. Consider *Isaiah* 48:6-7: *They are created (bara') now, not long ago; before today you have never heard of them, lest you should say, 'Behold, I knew them.'*

4.3.24 Eastern Orthodox theologians have conserved the patristic heritage of the logos-pervaded world order but have not extrapolated this in relation to a modern, scientific world view.

4.3.25 We are back to the ancient issue of being and becoming, order and disorder, necessity and chance, symmetry and spontaneity, permanence and the randomness which actuates instabilities. How is the world governed by God? That is, God as understood to be personal and omniscient and to be acting purposefully? We know that very small fluctuations in the natural processes can have very large chains of effects. The possible outcomes of the ways bits of matter interact are many. Against the forms of determinism held by Materialism and Idealism, Christians must hold to the view that the world is open to change and innovation *for which God is responsible*. But how?

4.3.26 John Polkinghorne rejects the ancient concepts of divinely implanted bias working within matter (loading of the process by divine intent) or the contrivings of a demiurge. For Polkinghorne, the purposes of the Creator who is both transcendent and immanent imply a self-emptying of God in the process which actually puts God at risk: not as direct initiator but as part of the whole process. Nevertheless, he rejects locking God into the process in the manner of the pantheists (Spinoza) or panentheists (Tillich), or the finite, developing God theory of A. N. Whitehead.

- 4.3.27            God is at risk, says Polkinghorne, but in a manner different from that implied simply by the intractability of matter. Rather, at risk because of the interplay between necessity and chance (he chose to create a world in which chance, like freedom, has a role to play (*Science and Creation*. London: SPCK, 1988, p. 63). Polkinghorne sees this as a step into the unknown, the unknown of the contingencies of chance and, presumably, the outcomes of free acts by sentient creatures whom God has designed with the capacity to make genuine choices from among alternatives. Is this consistent with traditional Christian understanding that God has known the end from the beginning? Can that kind of perfection be wedded to the reality and integrity of creative, purposeful change? Calvin thought so, expressing it in his elegant phrase that God did not create the world *ambiguo fine* (without knowing what he was doing, i.e., without having the ends in view).
- 4.3.28            At this point both Christian and non-Christian theologians, philosophers and scientists often rhapsodize: the process entails realization of vision. There is no assured program because the process is like the progress of love, says Polkinghorne; it is hesitant and uncertain. The plan is not invulnerable (though not because God is locked into the finite); rather, because of limitless potential and the role of chance. But I am uncomfortable with Polkinghorne's comment that the universe is kept in being, and that its processes are ordered, by a divine Juggler not by a divine Structural Engineer (p. 66). Somehow Paul's comment about God's activity as expressing the *counsels of his own purposes* (*Ephesians* 1:11) suggests something more rational than the contingencies of chance although in my personal experience, having started in my youth toward an engineering career, I am not at all sure that engineering activity progresses in quite the locked-in way the foregoing contrast suggests.
- 4.3.29            Surely it is true to say that from all that we can see the creation of creatures who can exercise freedom put the Creator and his creation at risk. That, I think, is the meaning of the Atonement: God granted freedom to sentient beings knowing that within himself he had the capacity to deal with creaturely rebellion and its consequences. God himself in Christ bears the responsibility for the kind of world he has created.
- 4.3.30            But what about the on-going creative process? It seems to me that the Spirit of God as the agent of creation is conserving and moving the created order toward God's willed ends. Thus some form of ongoing creativity and teleology appear to be indicated.
- 4.3.31            But how does this process work? We have yet to comprehend more fully what the biblical doctrines of creation and providence are saying to us as to the relation of a dependable world order to willed ends and the contingencies of chance. It is like the relation between mind and physical brain. What is the relation of the mental to the material so far as implementation of God's purposes is concerned?
- 4.3.32            The best I can do at present is to fall back on John Polkinghorne's response to Stephen Hawking's 'no singular beginning point hypothesis' (meaning no need for God or a point of creation) as being scientifically interesting but theologically insignificant. What place for a creator? Polkinghorne comments: *Every place ... God is not a God of the edges with a vested interest in boundaries. Creation is not something he did fifteen billion years ago, but is something he is doing now* (*The Faith of a Physicist*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 73). We appear at this juncture of our understanding to express no more than the biblically confirmed generalization that what has bred the process - call it evolution if you will - is intelligence on an infinite scale. There is a certain hubris which follows from the self-divinization of thinking that we human beings are the only intelligence and that this intelligence of ours leads inevitably, as Bertrand Russell poignantly lamented, to the conclusion that the only refuge of the soul is in mindless process and cosmic despair.

4.3.33

The ancient emanating gnostic demiurges, which Irenaeus satirized, don't work. Neither do I think that the pantheism of Spinoza, nor the panentheism of Paul Tillich (itself a modern form of gnosticism), nor the finite God with his attracting store of values of A. N. Whitehead works. Is there more than the attracting power of divinely stored ideal possibilities about which A. N. Whitehead so elegantly wrote, or does God's *action*, like ours, mean something more? Neither necessity (inexorable push), nor persuasion (the pull of attraction), nor manipulation (God intervening at the edges of the process) will do. We have somehow to put together in a fresh way the significance for the created order of God's transcendence (distinguishing God from the world), his immanence (his everywhere efficacious presence upon which the universe depends moment by moment for its existence, but which concept avoids pantheism), and his personhood (intentional activity which is distinct from detached or mechanical bringing forth).

4.3.34

*Creatio ex nihilo* is not inconsistent with the concept of the *creatio continua*. God has created a scientifically dependable world order which has as a part of its being the characteristic of openness to change, to innovation, to the emergence of new forms, not merely by chance, but in the terms of a doctrine of contingency which embraces the freedom of an infinite intelligence to act creatively and of human beings created in that image.

# THE INCARNATION

Samuel J. Mikolaski

## OUTLINE

- 5.0.0**            **Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith**
- 5.1.0**            **Classical Christological Controversy**
- 5.2.0**            **The Humanity Paradigm: Distortions of the Deity of Christ**
- 5.2.1**                      **Ebionites**
- 5.2.4**                      **Adoptionist Monarchians**
- 5.2.14**                     **Nestorians**
- 5.3.0**            **The Deity Paradigm: Distortions of the Humanity of Christ**
- 5.3.1**                      **Docetists**
- 5.3.7**                      **Apollinarians**
- 5.3.15**                     **Eutychians**
- 5.4.0**            **The Modalist Paradigm: Distortion of both the Deity and Humanity of Christ**
- 5.4.1**                      **Modalistic Monarchians**
- 5.5.0**            **The Subordination Paradigm**
- 5.5.1**                      **Arians**
- 5.6.0**            **Modern Christological Controversy**
- 5.6.1**                      **Incarnation as Myth**
- 5.6.36**                     **How Modern is Modern?**
- 5.7.0**            **Patristic Christological Formulation**
- 5.7.1**                      **The Rule of Faith and the Apostles' Creed**
- 5.7.12**                     **Creating a Language for the Incarnation**
- 5.7.35**                     **The Creed of Nicea, 325 CE**
- 5.7.42**                     **From Nicea to Chalcedon**
- 5.7.56**                     **The Creed of Chalcedon, 451 CE**
- 5.8.0**            **The Person of Jesus Christ**
- 5.8.9**                      **Recent Studies in Biblical Christology**
- 5.8.10**                     **1. I. Howard Marshall**
- 5.8.15**                     **2. C. F. D. Moule**
- 5.8.29**                     **3. Murray J. Harris**
- 5.8.33**                     **The Classical Affirmation**
- 5.8.37**                     **One Nature Christology**
- 5.8.46**                     **Kenotic Christology**
- 5.8.55**                     **Redintegration Christology**
- 5.8.64**                     **Re-affirming the Creed of Chalcedon**
- 5.8.80**                     **Who do Men Say that the Son of Man is?**

5.0.0

### **Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith**

5.0.1

From the earliest days of Christianity attempts have been made to separate the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. This is evident even in Apostolic times. *1 John* denounces those who deny that Jesus is Christ come in the flesh. The dominance of Christianity religiously and culturally in Europe during early and late medieval times had as part of its public, intellectual heritage unquestioned loyalty to Christ's true deity and true humanity as expressed in the classical Creeds, though among academics Christological debate was frequent and fierce.

5.0.2

In the eighteenth century there began a chipping away at public confidence in the received tenets about the person of Christ, which was anticipated more than a century before by Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) in his critical work *Tractus Theologico-Politicus*. This was augmented by the Higher Criticism attack on the credibility of the Scriptures which began in the eighteenth century and came to full flower in the nineteenth century. Questions about the focus of Apostolic authority, such as the rival claims of the Eastern and Western sees, combined with questions about the person of Christ reinforced the Higher Criticism textual and literary postulates.

5.0.3

F. C. Bauer (1792-1860) proposed an early version of tensions between the Petrine/Jerusalem and the Pauline/Antiochene traditions, which led to the theory of a primitive Galilean discipleship tradition which was later overlaid theologically by the Christian community. This is at the core of the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith debate. Recent studies of the social, religious and political life of first century Palestine propose contextualizing Jesus within a variegated culture. This is seen to be the way to get at the truth about him in contrast to the alleged mythical theological overlay of later Apostolic tradition.

5.0.4

The modern "Quest for the Historical Jesus" may be divided into an **Old Phase**, from about 1775 to mid-twentieth century, and a **New Phase** from mid-twentieth century to the present. The latter stages of the Old Phase divide between European and British Theology. The particular ideological slant which unifies the latter stages of the New Phase, now current, is cultural rather than theological (except general rejection of the supernatural and of the uniqueness of Jesus). The current cultural slant aims to contextualize and politicize Jesus within his society in one way or another.

5.0.5

Major theories developed in the earlier period include:

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H. S. Reimarus (1694-1768) said that Jesus was a Jewish revolutionary who failed in his mission. The stories about him in the Gospels are inventions which highlight strategic points of his teaching. These were later supplemented by Paul's creative theological imagination.

5.0.7

D. F. Strauss (1808-1874) held the miracle stories to be myths, though enduring moral truths can be abstracted from them. The task of religion and theology is to get at the core messages.

5.0.8

E. Renan (1823-1892) reiterated the foregoing. At first, Jesus drew crowds. Later, his theme of judgment disenchanted many and the Cross quickly followed rejection. Romantic miracle stories began to circulate. Paul and the church developed valuable lessons from an enduring message and from the example of Jesus' life.

5.0.9

W. Wrede (1859-1906) developed further the thesis that the Gospel stories are less history than later reflections embedded in a core of dogma. Wrede concisely states the view which pervades Jesus research to the present: Jesus was a simple Galilean and

his simple moralistic message was transformed by means of theological myths for later consumption.

- 5.0.10 Jesus as moral Teacher became a prominent theme during the nineteenth century. Immanuel Kant's ethical imperative had focused attention upon values and value-judgments. Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) argued that knowledge of God is based not on a rational *a priori* intuition but upon a value-judgment. *Though he slay me yet will I trust him* epitomizes that value-judgment, which Jesus exhibits in his death on the Cross. Jesus becomes the object of admiration for his suffering devotion and as Teacher. The essence of theological Liberalism as the movement crested in the first third of the twentieth century was the theme of the religion of Jesus not the religion about Jesus.
- 5.0.11 Johannes Weiss (1863-1914) focused on Jewish apocalyptic, a theme which is prevalent in current literature on Jesus. According to this the Gospels have less to do with moral ideals as earlier critics had thought, and more to do with expectations at a time when it was thought that God was about to dramatically step into history. The apocalyptic side of Jesus' teaching was the core of his message.
- 5.0.12 Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) is regarded as the watershed between critics of the past and modern theology so far as Jesus studies are concerned. This watershed is the line between the Liberal conception of the moralizing Jesus and the post-liberal conception of the eschatological Jesus, though Liberal theologians were quick to jump on the bandwagon. Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906, ET 1910) portrayed Jesus as a misguided visionary, a prophet whose illusions about the imminent establishment of God's Kingdom and his own Messianic role in it were disastrously overturned by the Cross. This is the Jesus of history, not the Christ of later apostolic theological formulation.
- 5.0.13 Schweitzer's concept derives significantly from his medical and psychiatric studies. For completion of his medical degree he produced a profile of Jesus which combines theological and psychiatric insights. It was later published in English as "The Sanity of the Eschatological Jesus," in *The Expositor*, and more recently as the *Psychiatric Study of Jesus*, 1948 (translated by Charles Joy). A key element of Schweitzer's theory is that hallucinations are not found only in the mentally ill, but occur as well during the religious experiences of otherwise apparently normal people: *they appear also in individuals who are very excitable emotionally, but who nevertheless can still be considered as falling entirely within the category of healthy people,*" (p.67, in Joy's translation). Jesus' moral teaching and call to repentance are unquestionably important aspects of Jesus' preaching. These amplified his message. But the core of the message was expectation of the Kingdom which, as to its imminence, proved to be an illusion. Note the following by Schweitzer, utilized by Charles Joy as an introduction:
- 5.0.14 *In the knowledge that he is the coming son of man, Jesus 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.*
- 5.0.15 Tracing trends in the Christology of the last two centuries can be tedious. Hugh Anderson, one of few who are competent in the three major strands of British, German and American theology has documented them in his *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 1964. N. T. Wright updates trends in *Who Was Jesus?*, 1992. Craig A. Evans has compiled an extensive annotated bibliography, *Jesus*, 1992.

- 5.0.16 I discern two major contrasting attitudes in the literature of the past half century.
- 5.0.17 First, the European trend, heavily influenced by Rudolf Bultmann, is either driven by the assumption, or concludes, that no life of Jesus is possible, or both. Bultmann argues that the historical situation is of little or no interest for theology. We have no firm knowledge about Jesus. Even Karl Barth, no friend of Bultmann's theologically, tends to rely more on the creeds and confessions of the church and upon the moral imperative which derives from immediate divine confrontation, than upon the historical record of Jesus' life and teachings. Strong objection to the anti-history stance of Bultmann and other Europeans has been voiced by Ethelbert Stauffer, Peter Stuhlmacher and Wolfhart Pannenberg. Stauffer at Erlangen said that the historical data are both concrete and dependable and are essential to faith. Stuhlmacher at Tübingen pleaded that historical and textual skepticism have gone as far as they can go; it is time to put the faith of the church back together again. Historical skepticism creates a docetic Christ.
- 5.0.18 Second, British Theology has been much more empirically and historically based and is less prone to non-historical flights of fancy than has European Theology. It is more firmly rooted creedally in the confessional tradition of the Church of England and the Free Churches, is driven by the conviction that the historical record is critical to the authenticity of the Christian witness, and that the documents of the New Testament cannot be dismissed easily. In short, a life of Jesus is possible. The list of British scholars who formed the vanguard of return to Biblical Theology when Liberalism ran out of steam in the 1930s is impressive. These, among others, include: C. H. Dodd, T. W. Manson, William Manson, W. R. Farmer, Vincent Taylor, C. E. Raven, R. V. G. Tasker, John Marsh, William Barclay, T. H. L. Parker, George Caird, H. C. G. Moule and F. F. Bruce. The list can be expanded considerably by adding the names of younger scholars who have been writing more recently.
- 5.0.19 In *Essays in Christology for Karl Barth*, 1956, several British scholars paid tribute to Barth, but as well they took exception to German historical skepticism. C. E. B. Cranfield in his essay "The Witness of the New Testament to Christ" rejects Bultmann's premise that the narrative materials of the New Testament are legend and expressions of community ideals, that the sayings of Jesus are constructions of the primitive Christian community, and that we know next to nothing about the historical Jesus. Cranfield roots the Gospel in authentic history. His lead-in paragraph is instructive (p. 73):
- 5.0.20 *When the early Christians confessed that Jesus was Lord, they were speaking about someone who had lived in Palestine in the reigns of the Emperors Augustus and Tiberius (being distinguished from other bearers of what was then a common name among the Jews by the mention of his home town) and had been put to death by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. The fact that the name of Jesus occurs well over a thousand times in the New Testament, and in every book with the single exception of 3 John, is itself an indication that the New Testament witness to Christ is inextricably bound up with the memory of this particular historical life. Specially important in this connection are the historical passages of the speeches in the earlier chapters of Acts. In other parts of the New Testament this testimony to the historic Jesus is all the time implicit, and again it becomes explicit in touches which are often all the more significant for being almost accidental.*
- 5.0.21 To this can be added the comment by T. W. Manson (*Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, 1962, p.8) which summarizes the counterbalance of British scholarship to the non-historical theology of the Continent: *It is time we began to consider the Gospels again as historical source material and not merely a case book of the early church's theology.*

- 5.0.22                    Reaction to Bultmann in Europe at mid-century inaugurated a **New Phase** in the quest for the historical Jesus. The 'New Quest' does not comprise a single school of thought. Ernst Kasemann in 1953 called for renewing the historical quest else, he said, the historical vessel remains empty. Why does the myth continue to generate faith, he asks? We cannot let go of the history. Roy A. Harrisville and C. E. Braaten drew scholarly interest to the New Quest in America.
- 5.0.23                    The 'Jesus Seminar' led by Robert Funk extended the work of the New Quest by concentrating on identifying any authentic sayings of Jesus (significantly, not the authenticity of stories about his life or deeds, the data of which continue to be deemed problematical). The consensus of the Seminar has been that the authentic sayings are very few in number, some say none at all. Burton Mack argues that Jesus' views were originally non-Jewish and that Mark turns Jesus' social protest into social conformity (*A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*, 1933). J. Dominic Crossan argues that Jesus was a clever, itinerant but elusive peasant teacher who challenged the current social order and that the *Gospel of Thomas* antedates the Synoptic Gospels (*The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, 1991).
- 5.0.24                    British and American scholarship have divided internally along widely diverging paths, none of which leads back to the theology of the classical creeds of the church. How is the social, religious and political contextualizing of Jesus playing out? A sampling of opinion follows:
- 5.0.25                    a) The Jesus as a Jewish revolutionary thesis, developed by S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*, 1967.
- 5.0.26                    b) The Jesus as an Hasidic Galilean thesis. Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 1973; and A. N. Wilson, *Jesus*, 1992, argue that Jesus was an Hasidic Jew, a local holy man in Palestine, of whom there were many in those times. He aimed to restore religious and ritual purity to the Jews, with the door more open to non-Jews. What became known confessionally as Christianity is a Pauline innovation.
- 5.0.27                    c) The public *versus* private aims thesis. Ben Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 1979, argued that publicly Jesus announced the Kingdom, but that privately his intention was to found the Church as a new Messianic community.
- 5.0.28                    d) The conflict over vested religious interests thesis. Marcus J. Borg in *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 1984, argues that Jesus opposed Jewish ethnic and religious exclusiveness and that the promised fall of Jerusalem was judgment for these attitudes. Jesus' message was revolutionary not in the sense of the militant nationalism prevalent among Jewish groups, but of political apocalypticism. Like Jeremiah, catastrophic events which befall Israel are to be seen as the judgment of God. Note also the work of John Bowker, *Jesus and the Pharisees*, 1973; and Gerald Sloyan, *Jesus in Focus: A Life in its Setting*, 1983.
- 5.0.29                    e) The conflict over denunciation of corruption thesis. E. P. Sanders in *Jesus and Judaism*, 1985, politicized Jesus within the Palestinian sectarian religious context. Jesus' action was not to cleanse the Temple but to announce judgment. The crucifixion was caused by Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the Temple. It may be disputed whether Jesus said that the Temple *would* inevitably be torn down, or *should* be torn down. Nevertheless, the new Messianic era would have as its object not merely spiritual renewal but economic and political reconstruction.
- 5.0.30                    f) The social and political liberation thesis. Thomas Sheehan adapts perspectives of Liberation Theology to the American scene in his *How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity*, 1986. Elements of this include radicalized ethics, calls for justice and mercy, escape from incarnation dogma (an invention of the Church), and condemnation

of the evils of organized religion. Cullen Murphy in his article "Who do men say that I am?" summarizes this trend (*Atlantic*, December 1986).

5.0.31 g) The historical enigma thesis. This is the view that Jesus constitutes a teasing historical conundrum. John Meier in "Jesus among the historians," *New York Times Book Review*, December 21, 1986, says that Jesus is a perennial question whose chief function for moderns is to force the asking of questions about the meaning of life.

5.0.32 h) The realized eschatology thesis. Bruce Chilton in *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible*, 1984, says that Jesus announces a kingdom and in a proleptic way inaugurates it. Chilton defines realization of the Kingdom more in libertarian and existential terms in contrast to the constricting traditional sabbatarian and ceremonial laws.

5.0.33 i) Other, more radical proposals are that Jesus was a publicity-seeking, sectarian, married, divorced and re-married Essene (Barbara Thiering, *Jesus the Man: A New Interpretation from the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1990); and that Jesus is a mythological figure who must be demythologized (John Spong, *Born of a Woman: A Bishop Rethinks the Birth of Jesus*, 1992).

5.0.34 Translation of documents and fragments from the Dead Sea area is producing fascinating results. Several Christmases ago in an Advent address Philip R. Davies, Old Testament Lecturer at Sheffield University in England, spoke about Messianic yearning in Palestine at the time of Christ and in the century which preceded Christ. The documents are rich and varied. Davies cites a Jewish poem from the century before Jesus (*The Listener*, British Broadcasting Corporation, December 17 and 24, 1987):

*upon whose belly pangs have come, and grievous pains,  
filling with anguish her child-bearing crucible.  
For the children have come to the throes of death  
and she labours in her pains who bears the Man.  
For amid the throes  
of death, she shall bring forth a man-child,  
and amid the pains of Hell there shall spring from her child-bearing crucible  
a Marvellous Mighty Counsellor;  
and the Man shall be delivered from out of the throes.  
When he is conceived all wombs shall quicken  
and the time of their delivery shall be in grievous pains;  
they shall be appalled who are with child.  
And when he is brought forth  
every pang shall come upon the child-bearing crucible.*

5.0.35 This was found in a cave near Qumran by the Dead Sea, left by a small sect who were overrun by the Romans in 68 CE. Davies points out that despite the citation from Isaiah about the Mighty Counsellor the poem does not announce a King. What sort of incarnation is it? Davies speculates,

5.0.36 *Let us guess a meaning: the 'mother' is the community of self-exiled Jews at Qumran, which sees in itself the 'true' remnant of the Jewish people. The mother is in great pain. Yet the pain is not that of death but of new life. From the travail now endured will come a new 'child', his appearance attended by universal upheaval. Or maybe the world is the Mother and the community itself is the Man, the herald of the new age. Either way, the message is the same when translated into the language of messiahs: We are, or will be, the 'messiah', and the messiah will be born only through pain and suffering - ours, of course. But when that messiah is born, the world will wonder.*

5.0.37 How is Jesus to be understood in light of military overthrow and occupation, political crises, sectarian movements and rampant messianic speculation?

- 5.0.38 One can safely predict that there will never be an end to speculation about the historical Jesus. Manuscript and other discoveries in the Dead Sea area have revitalized studies of the history of the period. These tend, I believe, to reinforce the view that the Gospels fit their age and milieu and that as biographical documents their credibility is enhanced. History, committed discipleship and theological formulation belong together. No Christian has ever claimed anything else but that the events are being read in a certain way - as all events in history are read, unless one is reduced to the banality that such and such an event happened on such and such a day. The writers are very clear that they are not only reporting events but are also telling us what was going on in the things that were happening.
- 5.0.39 Enrichment of the church's faith can and, I believe, will follow from the new studies of Palestinian life which are now open to scholars. Some assumptions and received ideas Christians have held will have to be questioned. Most important is the process which is tending to reinforce belief that the Christ of apostolic faith is identical with the Jesus of history. Fresh studies of the complexities of Palestinian life will cast a brighter light on the significance of the confrontations Jesus had with religious and political leaders of the day, the significance of his recorded deeds, and the meaning of many of his sayings.
- 5.0.40 From a theological standpoint, two foci are crucial in the on-going task:
- 5.0.41 First, the issue of Messianic promise and fulfillment. A key feature of the unity and harmony of the Scriptures is, as C. H. Dodd argued, the truth that the Suffering Servant of *Isaiah* 53 is the Son of Man who comes to seek and save the lost of *Mark* 10:45. This is to say that the Cross was not an historical accident either in the mind of Jesus or in the mind of the first Christians. The Cross was not the regrettable end for a mistaken itinerant Palestinian visionary caught up in the heat of the religious and political fervor of his times. Rather, the Cross was central to the redeeming purpose of God and that Jesus knew what the true Messianic mission was and what he was doing as he did it. That this is integral to the earliest authentic tradition of the Gospels and that it authentically represents the understanding of the earliest Christians as to Christ's teaching and the significance of his life is the on-going challenge in Jesus studies so far as confessional Christianity is concerned. In this regard, note the helpful study by Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives*, 1983. That Jesus the Son of Man is the incarnate Son of God who gave his life for the sins of the world is not a subsequent theological invention laid upon primitive Galilean moralizing.
- 5.0.42 Second, the issue of the Kingdom message. The concept of the Kingdom follows from the Messianic, redemptive act. The universal call to become Christ's followers, to establish the church, and to work in his Kingdom's interests until his return is authentically a coherent dominical mandate, not an extrapolation of myth and legend.
- 5.0.43 As to the theological issues involved, little has changed during the past two centuries. The stakes have become higher because the debate now includes evaluations of Palestinian historical data unavailable even in later patristic times. Contextualization of Jesus is a worthy task. The course of inquiries into the authenticity of the New Testament accounts tends, I believe, to reinforce the traditional view that how Jesus' teaching, controversies and death are recorded and framed and what he came to accomplish as Messiah all fit credibly within the context of first century Palestine.
- 5.0.44 In the volume I cited previously (*Jesus and Christian Origins*, 1964), Hugh Anderson traces the shift away from the Historical Quest and the emergence of the New Hermeneutic, then pleads that although the facts of the New Testament tradition are hard to come by, *the facts are there*, (p. 307). The Church believed that in the death of Christ God himself had sacrificed himself. This is consistent with the witness of the Jerusalem

apostles and with the message Paul transmitted (p. 308). He then adds (pp. 305, 306, 317):

*How then, we ask, can Jesus be known by us? For my part, I am forced to acknowledge that he may only come to us of a surety through our receiving and responding to the apostolic testimony within the context of the community's life and faith and worship ... the message of the Word made 'flesh' commits us to diligent study of a particular track of history ... There is, to be sure, a limit to what the historian can do: he is not able to give us Jesus in the fullness of the mystery of his person. How then does he come to us? The traditional answer of the church has been that, within the life of the community of faith and in and through the documents of faith, the spirit testifies to him ... It is a good answer ... to the question 'Who was Jesus?' the Church answers with her praising confession. She adores her God in singing the honor of Jesus: 'He lives, he lives; Christ Jesus lives today.'*

5.0.45 We are left with the core theological question, namely, the truth of the Incarnation.

### 5.1.0 **Classical Christological Controversy**

5.1.1 Very little has been thought of or explored theoretically about the person of Christ which was not proposed during the formative period of Christian Theology, namely, the first four centuries of the Christian Era. In the following I outline views under three headings: those that begin from the humanity of Christ, those that begin from the divinity of Christ, and the subordinationism of the Arians.

### 5.2.0 **The Humanity Paradigm: Distortions of the Deity of Christ**

5.2.1 **Ebionites.** The origin of the term Ebion or Hebion is uncertain. It probably derives from the Hebrew term which means *the poor* rather than being the name of the founder of the movement. This was a first and second century sect, or possibly an attitude among many sects. B. Altaner, F. L. Cross and H. E. W. Turner along with others hold that the *Pseudo-Clementine Epistles* (made up of 20 Homilies and 10 Recognitions) are important sources for understanding the movement. It was a Jewish form of Christianity. Henry Bettenson groups Ebionism under Gnosticism which, until recently, served as a catch-all category for theories of downwardly cascading divinity. On the strength of Irenaeus' analysis, the views of the Ebionites, Cerinthians and Nicolaitans have been grouped. In light of *1 John* one can place the sect early in the Christian era. *1 John* is a strong rejoinder to the view which denies that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh (4:2-4). F. L. Cross and H. Bettenson find significant Gnostic elements in the view that Jesus is a prophetic manifestation, an aeon, but not the redeemer through the Cross.

5.2.2 In the *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus discusses the Ebionites in the same context as Cerinthus (1.26.1), as does the *Against All Heresies* III (no longer attributed to Tertullian). The Ebionites used Matthew only, repudiated Paul and urged keeping the ceremonial law, including circumcision. They revered Jerusalem as their spiritual home. Jesus was an ordinary man born of Mary and Joseph. They rejected the union of God and man in Christ (*Against Heresies* 5.1.3), thus effectively denying the incarnation and the *showing forth of a new kind of generation* of humanity, namely, a generation of life not Adamic death. Irenaeus argues that the incarnation discloses true humanity and true divinity united in the renewed creation of the image and likeness of God in Christ. It was fundamental to the Ebionite, Marcionite and Cerinthian cause to separate the historical Jesus from the eternal Christ on grounds of conserving the impassibility of the divine principle (3.11.7).

- 5.2.3 Ebionite views have customarily been relegated to the periphery of Palestinian thought on grounds that they merely reaffirm Jewish ceremonial law. Their core beliefs parallel Gnostic teaching which emphasizes the humanity of Jesus but deems irrational any thought of the transcendent Principle taking flesh. This suggests a philosophical component which goes beyond re-affirmation of ceremonial law. The modern parallel appears to be striking. In our time the concept of incarnation is relegated to myth because it is deemed irrational metaphysically to conjoin the divine and human in one earthly life. What remains is a moral casket.
- 5.2.4 **Adoptionist Monarchians.** These terms identify a range of views which addressed the issue of the unity and plurality of the Godhead: how to protect a unitary conception of the divine being (God the Father) while allowing a divine or quasi-divine status to Jesus (the Son)? This theory conserves the monarchy (metaphysical unity) of God by empowering Jesus the man with the Christ; hence the designations Adoptionist or Dynamic Monarchianism. Little has changed since. This concept is a mainstream component of modern Liberal Theology commonly known as Adoptionist Christology.
- 5.2.5 Incarnation becomes the Holy Spirit-inspiration of the human Jesus, not the conjoining of the divine and human natures in one person. Appeals were made to prophetic promises of divinely inspired prophetic ministry (*Deuteronomy* 18:18; *Isaiah* 42:1; *Matthew* 12:18-20) to the Annunciation (*Luke* 1:35) and especially to the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at his baptism (*Mark* 1:9-12; *Luke* 3:22; 4:18-21).
- 5.2.6 In *Against All Heresies* 8 this view is attributed to Theodotus who was condemned by Pope Victor at Rome in the period 189-198 CE. Hippolytus in his *Refutation of All Heresies* 7.23 identifies Theodotus' views with those of the Gnostics, Cerinthus and Ebion. Jesus is a mere man upon whom the Christ descended at his baptism. There is no question of the Godhead being united to a human person. Divinity becomes a form of endowment, indwelling or participation.
- 5.2.7 Primary focus should be put on Cerinthus, who was active at the close of the first century CE. It would appear that *1 John* may have been directed against Cerinthus, or a viewpoint present at the time which Cerinthus reflects. Irenaeus furnishes a succinct statement in *Against Heresies* 1.26.1:
- 5.2.8 *He represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin, but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation, while he nevertheless was more righteous, prudent, and wise than other men. Moreover, after his baptism, Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove from the Supreme Ruler, and that then he proclaimed the unknown Father, and performed miracles. But at last Christ departed from Jesus, and that then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible, inasmuch as he was a spiritual being.*
- 5.2.9 The foregoing explains neatly the need for the strong re-affirmation in *1 John* 5:6 that Jesus Christ came not only by water (i.e., by his Baptism and endowment with the Spirit) but also by blood (i.e., by the suffering of the Cross) and that it is the one Jesus Christ who does these things, not that Jesus and the Christ can be separated as to identity and role.
- 5.2.10 Modern Adoptionism is not primarily concerned with distancing the 'Principality,' as Irenaeus puts it, from the creation in order to guard God's impassibility. There is indeed a unitarian substratum to modern rejection of true incarnation; however, this combines with the assumption that the idea of incarnation is not credible. The focus of modern Adoptionism is empowerment, which then becomes the model for analogous Christian empowerment. We become sons of God like Jesus, empowered by the Spirit to do good.

- 5.2.11 Modern Adoptionism is reflected in John Knox's exegesis of *Romans* 1:4 (*Interpreter's Bible* 9.382-383) where he says that full-blown Johannine incarnationism was preceded among the first Palestinian Christians by a primitive adoptionism. This is the way in which he interprets Paul's statement, *And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*. Knox holds that Paul here makes a concession to the supposed early Adoptionist Christology of the Roman Church:
- 5.2.12 *By 'adoptionist' Christology is meant the view that Jesus became the Son of God (or the 'Christ' or the 'Lord') at some point after the beginning of the earthly life; that God chose or 'adopted' him to be the Messiah. The earliest Christology was almost certainly of this type, the Resurrection being the moment of adoption.*
- 5.2.13 Prior to the current mythologizing of the incarnation, Adoptionism has been, and in many instances continues in Liberal Theology to be, the most popular way of interpreting the person of Christ because it furnishes opportunity to draw a parallel between important aspects of Christ's life and the Christian life without the metaphysical problems which attend the concept of incarnation.
- 5.2.14 **Nestorius.** He was Bishop of Constantinople 428-451 CE and was of the Antiochene School of theology. The period of his episcopate marked the climax of later patristic controversies over the person of Christ and movement toward final formulation of the orthodox statements which emerged from the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE and the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE.
- 5.2.15 The modern tendency to epitomize ancient perspectives and controversies sometimes does them an injustice. The complexities of patristic discussions about the person of Christ are well-illustrated by the controversies over Nestorius' views. A number of prominent bishops united after Nestorius' condemnation in 431 CE to form a Nestorian Church, which became a significant missionary force in Arabia and India during the Middle Ages. It barely survives today, misnamed in English as 'Assyrian Christians', in regions of Asia Minor and Iraq.
- 5.2.16 Whether Nestorius' views were in fact 'Nestorian' and heretical remains controversial. He strongly affirmed the unity of the person of Christ. The metaphysics of the union appears to be the central question. It is commonly thought that he affirmed not only two natures in Christ, but two different persons. This is almost certainly a caricature of his views. He rejected the notion of a mixture of the divine and the human. Did his concept of the conjunction of the divine and human seriously undercut the unity of the person of Christ, or did his rejection of Cyril of Jerusalem's language of an hypostatic union, as the orthodox contended it must be, constitute simply a war over words? What sort of conjunction did Nestorius have in mind?
- 5.2.17 Early in his episcopate he sided with those who rejected the term *theotokos* (God-bearing) and 'Mother of God' designations which had become a mantra in the growing popular devotion to the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God at Rome. Nestorius preferred to say that the Virgin was Man-bearing and Christ-bearing, but that *God cannot have a Mother*. The question became, could the Virgin bear the Logos?
- 5.2.18 The controversy with Cyril of Jerusalem developed early in Nestorius' career at Constantinople. Both lobbied Celestine, Bishop of Rome. E. R. Hardy and C. C. Richardson (*Christology of the Later Church Fathers*, 1954, pp.346-348) cite a previously rarely seen letter from Nestorius to Celestine in which Nestorius tries to make his case in the sweeping brushstrokes of a public relations document: He says that he is defending the consubstantiality of the Word with the Father against those who say that the Word took his beginning from the Christ-bearing Virgin. He is specifically opposing those who deify Jesus' humanity by union with the Word, *which is nothing more nor less*

*than to corrupt both.* In Scripture, he says, Mary is spoken of as Mother of Christ, not as Mother of God (note *Luke* 1:31; *John* 2:1; *Acts* 1:14). Nestorius says, *what is born is properly consubstantial with the parent, and that it was to the creature of the Lord's humanity, joined with God, of the Virgin by the Spirit, that what was seen among men was committed.* It would be interesting to know whether the phrase *what was seen among men* in the Latin text of the surviving letter translates Nestorius' use of *prosopon*. Nestorius goes on,

5.2.19 *If anyone wishes to use this word theotokos with reference to the humanity which was born, joined to God the Word, and not with reference to the parent, we say that this word is not appropriate for her who gave birth, since a true mother should be of the same essence as what is born of her. But the term could be accepted in consideration of this, that the word is used of the Virgin, only because of the inseparable temple of God the Word which was of her, not because she is the mother of God the Word - for none gives birth to one older than herself.*

5.2.20 The common allegation against Nestorius is that he splits the God-man into two persons. He denied this. Or, did he keep the two natures distinct, while uniting the worship of the one Christ? Do the humanity and divinity of Christ exist alongside of each other such that each nature has its own metaphysical reality. Is this the core of the controversy? Does he end up with two *hypostases* while affirming a single, unique *prosopon* which reflects the union? Was he able to clarify the metaphysical nature and status of the union he proposed? He did not like Cyril's language of an hypostatic union or of a union according to nature. The union (*henosis*) of which he speaks is better defined as conjunction (*sunapheia*) which keeps the two natures distinct, even though he qualifies his concept of union with adjectives such as perfect (*akra*), exact (*akribes*) and continuous (*dienekes*).

5.2.21 It is possible to suggest answers to some of the questions since the discovery, translation and publication with commentary in English by G. R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson of *Nestorius: The Bazaar of Heracleides*, 1925, following publication of the Syrian text in 1910, though J. Bethune-Baker had published extracts in 1908. Bethune-Baker held that Nestorius did not hold the views later designated Nestorianism.

5.2.22 Nestorius' solution was to guard the impassibility of the Word while acknowledging the passibility of the human Jesus by conjoining the two natures in one life but not uniting them hypostatically (the common way of defining one person). His formulation appeared to undercut the work of Christ because it made the flesh of the incarnate incapable of carrying the experiences of the eternal Word on the Cross. His categories were inadequate to the conviction that in Jesus Christ God had entered upon the full experience of manhood terminating in the Cross; that by both being and action salvation is procured for humanity. While he held that the content of the divine will and the human will of Christ were identical, their union was more than moral. It was metaphysical in a very specific sense.

5.2.23 Leonard Hodgson unravels it as follows: Nestorius held the incarnation to be a union of the two realities in Christ *in prosopon*. In Greek thought, every bit of reality, every individual existent, has its *ousia*, *physis* and *prosopon*. This is as true of Christ's divinity as it is of Christ's humanity. In the incarnation these differences in kind are joined *in prosopon* only; that is, not as to *ousia*, nor as to *physis*, but only as to *prosopon*.

5.2.24 Crucial to the foregoing is to recognize that for Nestorius *prosopon* is not just an appearance but is part of the reality of any particular existing thing, without which it would not be what it is. An *ousia* cannot be without a *prosopon* nor can a *prosopon* be without an *ousia*. Thus a prosopic union is not one in appearance only, but is a reality of its own kind. It is unity in its visible aspect or form, not as to inner nature. Formulating a conception on the basis of a metaphysic which allows reality to a visible aspect while

keeping the two natures inwardly separate was deemed by his critics to be inadequate. This is not hypostatic, organic union of the two natures in one person.

- 5.2.25                   The key question appears to be whether such a metaphysic is adequate to the New Testament witness that the incarnate Word has come in the flesh. That is the more important question, rather than whether the language of hypostatic union is at all clearer as to how God and man can be united in one person than Nestorius' way of putting the matter. One must say that Nestorius' formulation is inadequate to the apostolic witness, while conceding that the orthodox had not solved the metaphysical problem of how God and man can be united in one person.
- 5.2.26                   Consider three issues:
- 5.2.27                   First, even if we concede that reality is made up of *ousia, physis and prosopon*, if each *ousia* has its appropriate *prosopon* then two identical *prosopa* imply one *ousia* and *physis*. Nestorius' metaphysic appears to break down.
- 5.2.28                   Second, the metaphysic fails to take account of other kinds of unity, such as between God and humanity in prophetic inspiration, or of Christ and humans in the New Testament. Nestorius' metaphysic cannot unite them because to admit that his three kinds of union are not exhaustive would be fatal to his argument. He has already denied that Godhood and Manhood can be united in anything but a prosopic union. This fails to make of Christ a man like other men.
- 5.2.29                   Third, if Nestorius fails to provide for a real union between Godhood and Manhood in Christ, or for a real union between God and the Christian in Christ, then the one Mediator between God and human beings has not been found and God and human beings stand forever apart.
- 5.2.30                   Cyril of Jerusalem's greatness lay in the apparent logical inconsistency of holding that the eternal Word was joined to passible flesh in a real, hypostatic union of the two natures in the one person of Christ, else humanity has no Savior. In his final challenge to Nestorius in late 430 CE, which includes the twelve anathemas, Cyril speaks for himself, the Egyptian bishops and Celestine of Rome:
- 5.2.31                   *So confessing the Word united hypostatically to flesh, we worship one Son and Lord Jesus Christ, neither putting apart and dividing man and God, as joined with each other by a union of dignity and authority - for this would be an empty phrase and no more - nor speaking of the Word of God separately as Christ, and then separately of him who was of a woman as another Christ, but knowing only one Christ, the Word of God the Father with his own flesh ... We do not divide the terms used in the Gospels of the Saviour as God or man between two hypostases, or Persons, for the one and only Christ is not twofold, though he is thought of as out of two, and as uniting different entities into the indivisible unity ...*
- 5.2.32                   It is instructive to note Cyril's twelve anathemas, with which he closes the letter to Nestorius and which were approved at Ephesus in 431 CE. These identify many of the subtleties of the issues at stake. Those are anathematized who:
1. deny that Emmanuel is God in truth and that the Virgin is *theotokos*.
  2. deny that the Word is personally united by *hypostases* to flesh so that there is but one Christ, the same both God and man together.
  3. divide the *hypostases* in the one Christ joining them in dignity or authority or power, not in a union by nature.
  4. attribute the Gospel sayings variously, befitting two separate persons, divine and human.
  5. call Christ God-bearing man rather than God in truth.
  6. say that the Word of God the Father was the God or Master of Christ.

7. say that Jesus was energized as a man by the Word from God.
8. say that the man assumed by the Word is to be worshipped with the Word.
9. say that the Spirit used Christ but that the Spirit was not his own.
10. deny that the Word of God offered himself sacrificially as our High Priest.
11. deny that the flesh of Christ is that of the Word and is life-giving.
12. deny that the Word himself suffered and died in the flesh.

### 5.3.0 **The Deity Paradigm: Distortions of the Humanity of Christ**

5.3.1 **Docetists.** Adolf Harnack traced the roots of Docetism to the Gnostic tendency to separate the heavenly Christ from the earthly Jesus, and to the Marcionite perversion of Paul's contrast between the spirit and the flesh (note Irenaeus' linking of Cerinthus and Marcion, *Against Heresies* 3.3.4). The non-being of matter, along with the concept of evil being inherent in matter, led to Christ's body being posited as phantasmal. The term docetic derives from *dokein*, 'to seem'. The impassibility of God precluded divine suffering, hence one way of shielding the divine Christ from having contact with impure matter, as any thought of incarnation requires, is to make of the humanity of Christ a 'seeming'. Whether Docetism was a specific movement, or an attitude inherent in Greek culture and religion, is a matter of dispute. That the perception was pervasive and of long duration in the ancient world is not in dispute.

5.3.2 Even centuries after the Apostolic Fathers the Gnostic tendency to exclude suffering from God persisted. For example, though noted in the West as a defender of orthodoxy, Hilary of Poitiers (c.315 - 367 CE) says (*The Trinity*, 10.23) that while Christ took to himself true humanity after the likeness of our humanity, the emptying of the form of this humanity did not abolish its essential nature (9:14). He took a new form, but remained what he was: *When, in this humanity, he was struck with blows, or smitten with wounds, or bound with ropes, or lifted on high, he felt the force of suffering, but without its pain.* Just as it is in the nature of an arrow to make a hole or to inflict pain, argues Hilary, so it is the nature of air or water when pierced by an arrow to show no hole and experience no pain. The body of Christ because of its form and nature suffered the violence of the Cross, but without consciousness of the pain ... *for his body possessed a unique nature of its own ...*

5.3.3 Ignatius (c.35 - 107 CE) frequently mentions the reality of Christ's humanity and attacks the Docetic view. He exclaims (*Trallians* 10, Shorter Version): *but if, as some affirm who are without God - that is, are unbelievers - his suffering was only a semblance (dokein), why am I a prisoner? ... in that case I am dying in vain. Then indeed am I lying concerning the Lord.* Leading up to this in the previous section he had made an eloquent plea for the indispensable role of the historical Jesus in the historical outworking of redemption:

5.3.4 *Be deaf therefore when anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the family of David, and of Mary, who was truly born, both ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died in the sight of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth; who also was truly raised from the dead, when his Father raised him up, as in the same manner his Father shall raise up in Christ Jesus us who believe in him, without whom we have no true life.*

5.3.5 Polycarp (c.69 - c.155 CE) in *Philippians* 7 paraphrases *1 John* by declaring that *whoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is antichrist, and whoever does not confess the testimony of the Cross is of the Devil.*

5.3.6 The Apostolic Fathers vigorously fought any Docetic tendency. Inadequate attention has been paid to the fact that modern demythologizing of the historical record creates a Docetic Christology. By diminishing the historical Jesus the Gospel is undermined because the historical reality of the Cross is emptied of its Apostolic

significance as the death of the Son of God for the sins of the world. Contemporary gnostic tendencies are as unacceptable as were their ancient counterparts.

5.3.7

**Apollinarians.** Apollinaris, born c.310 CE, was bishop of Laodicea in Syria 361-390 CE. He was charged with co-mingling the two natures of Christ, or of displacing the human mind with the divine Word. This was the period leading up to the Creeds of Ephesus in 431 CE and Chalcedon in 451 CE, which Councils were convened to consider the problem of the two natures of Christ. Apollinaris' orientation was toward Alexandrian theology and Athanasius. He was an enthusiast for Nicea, opposing what he charged was the dualistic strain in the Christology of the Antiochene School. Following Nicea, the struggle between these two schools was over how to find a way between the error on the one hand of dividing Christ into two persons, and the error on the other hand of confusing the two natures. Positively put, the question was how to affirm the deity of Christ and the perfect union of the two natures in his incarnate person. The instinct of the orthodox side questioned whether Apollinaris allowed to the incarnate Christ, as we would say, a normal human psychology in light of the description of his human experiences including suffering in the Gospels.

5.3.8

Apollinaris' elevation to become Bishop of Laodicea in 361 coincided with Athanasius' return to Alexandria a few months later from yet another banishment and his convening of a Synod, to which Apollinaris sent delegate monks. A *Synodal Letter to the Christians at Antioch*, 362 CE, was prepared. It concerned terms on which Arians could re-unite with the main body of Christians on grounds of belief in the integrity of Christ's human nature and its perfect union with the Logos. There is no record of Apollinaris rejecting any wording in the Letter. It was accepted at Antioch by Paulinus who in his confession of faith says, *For the Savior had a body neither without soul, nor without sense, nor without intelligence. For it was impossible, the Lord being made man for us, that his body should be without intelligence.* This is a troubling fact in our attempt to grasp what Apollinaris was trying to say, especially in view of his friendship in the early years with Athanasius and his defence of the Nicene Creed. In Athanasius' *Letter to Epictetus*, Bishop of Corinth, written after 362 CE but before Apollinaris' views came to full crisis, there is no reference to Apollinarian deviance. The letter is a sharp rebuke to those who claim that the body of Christ is of one essence with the Godhead of the Word; or conversely, that the Word is co-essential with the body: *the body of the Lord was a true one; but it was this, because it was the same as our body ...*(8). Another puzzling matter is that there was apparently no objection from Apollinaris to the wording of the Creed of Constantinople, 381 CE. This was fundamentally a re-statement of Nicea. That Apollinaris apparently denied that Christ had a human mind did not seem to conflict in his own mind with the words of Constantinople *and became incarnate ... and became a man*, which replaced the words of Nicea *and was made man*.

5.3.9

Later in the *Formula of Union* (433 CE), Cyril of Jerusalem tried to clear himself of suspicion of Apollinarianism by affirming Nicea and the consubstantiality of Christ's manhood with ours as an unconfused union of two natures perfect in manhood, but he rejects *that there was a mixture or confusion or blending of God the Word with the flesh*. He adds the improbable but kerugmatically necessary two-sided element of faith which so bedeviled the issue in ancient times: *The Word of God is impassible, though in his all-wise dispensation of the mystery, he is seen to attribute to himself the sufferings undergone by his own flesh.*

5.3.10

The question in ancient times, as today, is how to affirm that God and Man are one Christ whose true human experiences are indeed the experiences of God the Word? Jesus Christ in the flesh is indeed our brother, but he is not the Christ in virtue of empowerment or adoption; he is the one Christ not two, our Lord, in virtue of being God incarnate. The metaphysics, psychology and logic of this compels some modern theologians to declare the concept of incarnation to be a myth.

- 5.3.11 Apollinaris taught that for Christ to be one person he must also have a unity of nature composed of impassible deity and passible flesh. To achieve this, Apollinaris appears to have displaced the normal human psyche in Jesus with the eternal Word. This was erected on the prior philosophical assumption of a tripartite view of human nature, namely, body, soul and spirit (or mind). It is the mind which forms the distinctive individual person (*hypostasis*). An Apollinarian mantra was *one incarnate nature of the divine Word*. The human nature is taken up into Christ's divinity making it incapable of sinning, and making it a true object of worship through eucharistic partaking. Only by substitution of the eternal Word for the human mind of Jesus could a true new beginning for humanity in the incarnation be made.
- 5.3.12 The letters of Gregory Nazianzus against Apollinaris illustrate the points at issue (*Letter to Cedonius*, Ep.101): Gregory charges that Apollinaris' Jesus is without human mind, and that *if anyone has put his trust in him as a man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind*. He says Apollinaris teaches that Godhead took the place of the human intellect. The result is, says Gregory, that they are forced to divide the experiences of Jesus and the Christ so that they ascribe to Jesus the things which concern humanity, but the things which concern divinity and the exercise of divine powers they ascribe to the Christ, not to the one person Jesus Christ.
- 5.3.13 An anecdote is pertinent, referred to by Epiphanius in connection with his visit to Antioch in 367 CE in an effort to mediate between several competing claimants to be the legitimate Bishop of Antioch (cited by R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search For the Christian Doctrine of God*, 1988, p. 659). Apollinaris had named Vitalis. When questioned by Epiphanius, Vitalis readily affirmed his belief in the Nicene Creed. He also affirmed belief that Christ took a human body (*soma*) and a human soul (*psyche*), but not a human mind (*nous*). The name-calling is delicious: Apollinaris called Gregory and the orthodox *Anthropolater*, meaning that they worshipped God in a perfect man, or a God-bearing man. Gregory called Apollinaris and his followers *Sacrolater*, meaning flesh-worshippers; that they worshipped God in a body without a human mind, a flesh-bearing God.
- 5.3.14 The instinct of Gregory and others of the times was simply that Apollinaris' views could not stand up under the scrutiny of the humanity of Christ as presented in the Gospels. Pauline texts which spoke of Christ's heavenly origin cannot be used, said Gregory, against the authentic humanity of Christ. For example (*1 Corinthians 15:47*), *No man has ascended up into heaven save he which came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven* cannot be used to suggest *which came down from heaven* means anything less than full humanity. A new beginning for humanity is impossible on Apollinaris' terms, says Gregory, because the humanity is truncated and therefore *what has not been assumed cannot be restored; it is what is united with God that is saved*. The sinning element had to be assumed.
- 5.3.15 **Eutychians.** The combination of growing political power along with religious authority which the Church enjoyed in the fifth century devolved upon bishops and presbyters of key sees. Eutyches, Archimandrate (Abbot) of a monastery near Constantinople was among those in the capital of the Eastern Empire who wielded considerable influence. He opposed Nestorius but was himself denounced and deposed at Constantinople in 448 CE on grounds that he conflated the two natures of Christ. He won temporary support in the West but that quickly faded and finally the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE ruled against him. The charge was that he denied to Christ a manhood that was of the same essential nature as ours. Leo, Bishop of Rome, in his famous *Tome*, of June 449, which led up to the Council, quotes him as saying *I confess that our Lord was of two natures before the union, but after the union I confess one nature*. This appeared to postulate a third kind of nature - a *tertium quid*. The two natures to which Eutyches refers were pre-natures, within the foreknowledge of God, prior to the

Incarnation, only one afterward. Eutyches is regarded as the founder of the Monophysite view of the person of Christ.

5.3.16 As the political tide turned against him charges were piled on. He was accused of Gnostic tendencies because, it was charged, on his argument the humanity of Christ is absorbed by the divinity of Christ. Divinity swallows up humanity,

5.3.17 In the *Tome* one of Leo's chief arguments is that no redemption or triumph is possible unless Christ's humanity was neither contaminated by sin nor detained by death, and unless he *had taken upon himself our nature and made it his own*. Certain key phrases became the foci of the debate: That, according to Eutyches, the uniqueness of the Virgin Birth indicates *that our Lord Jesus Christ was not of our nature*. Reports of the controversy suggest a certain annoying pedantry, though the personalizing of controversy was common. Leo says, *And he should not have spoken idly to the effect that the Word was in such a sense made flesh, that the Christ who was brought forth from the Virgin's womb, had the form of a man but had not a body really derived from his mother's body*. That the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, he adds, must mean *in that flesh which he assumed from a human being, and which he animated with the spirit of rational life*. The distinctiveness of both natures and substances is preserved and both meet in one person with the improbable inference of orthodox theology that one side of his person can die but the other cannot. Leo then adds his own oft-repeated formula: *Therefore in the entire and perfect nature of very Man was born very God, whole in what was his, whole in what was ours*.

5.3.18 Opposition to Eutyches by the orthodox, reflected in Leo's *Tome*, has at its root a philosophical conviction that the manner of Christ's birth and the wonder of the eternal Logos having been made flesh must not undermine the integrity of either the divine nature or the human nature. In the following, the phrase *proper character of the kind* is the operative philosophical concept which aims to conserve the authenticity of Christ's human nature: *But we are not to understand that 'generation', peerless wonderful, and wonderfully peerless, in such a sense as that the newness of the mode of production, did away with the proper character of the kind*.

5.3.19 Eutyches' problems may have been due to his stubborn repetition of an unelucidated mantra in an era characterized by fierce theological dispute, jockeying for power and personal invective. In part, he was trying to distance himself from Nestorius' teaching that Jesus was a divinely energized man. Eutyches was probably close intellectually to the view of Cyril of Alexandria (Patriarch in 412 CE; died 444 CE): *one nature of the Word made flesh*, which was intended to conserve the unity of the two natures in one person (*hypostasis*).

5.3.20 The Monophysite concept of one divine-human nature persisted in two main forms: a mild form such as Cyril's, and Eutyches' harder form which conflated Christ's body with divinity. On this view the impassibility of Christ could be breached only because Christ willed it, not because suffering was inherent in the nature of his manhood. A Monophysite view of Christ's person continues to be the teaching of three Eastern Orthodox traditions: Coptic Christians of Egypt and Ethiopia, Syrian Jacobite Christians, and the Armenian Orthodox Christians. The division between them and Chalcedon-oriented Western Christianity remains to the present day, though the trend has been to confess the faith of the church in strong pre-Chalcedon Nicene terms with moderate rather than strident Monophysite emphasis.

5.4.0 **The Modalist Paradigm: Distortion of both the Deity and Humanity of Christ.**

5.4.1 **Modalistic Monarchians.** Various forms of Modalism were influential for over a century during the early history of the Christian Church. Fundamentally, Modalism is a

unitarian conception of God. It is God metamorphosed. Its chief aim was to protect the unity of the Godhead by reducing the identity or status of the constituent persons of the Trinity to modes or manifestations of the one God. These manifestations can be either simultaneous or successive. It is a tribute to Modalists that they managed to distort both the deity and humanity of Christ.

5.4.2 The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all one in the sense that the identity is interchangeable and the personality in each case indistinguishable. Paternity is the function of God when he acts as Father, the originator of all that is. The temporal garb of humanity is the function of God when he acts as Son to redeem humanity. Inspiration is the role of God when he acts as the Holy Spirit. The reality is one; the appearances, or modes, or functions vary.

5.4.3 Tertullian quipped that God becomes a turncoat deity - he does everything by turns. Basil the Great commented that the Modalist God is metamorphosed to meet the changing needs of the world (is this the original germ of Process Theology?). The net result is to ascribe a history to God, including that the Father suffered as the Son, while at the same time making the humanity of Christ a cipher theologically.

5.4.4 Modalist influence became widespread because it became dominant as the theological motif of Papal power at Rome for several generations at the end of the second century CE until well past the middle of the third century. Apparently a disciple of Noetus of Smyrna, who flourished in the last decade of the second century CE, brought the doctrine to Rome, as did Praxeas, who died in 213 CE. Theodotus of Byzantium, a leather merchant, was excommunicated from the church at Rome by Pope Victor c.189-190 CE for teaching a form of Adoptionist Monarchianism, which held that Jesus the man was indwelt by the Christ. Nevertheless, a few years later Modalism predominated at Rome. Sabellius became an articulate exponent of Modalist Theology. Pope Zephyrinus (c.195-207 CE), followed by Callistus (c.217-222), were Modalists. Opposition was fierce and vocal, though it is difficult to know how much of the controversy was a struggle for power in the church and how much was motivated theologically. The last of the Greek-writing fathers at Rome, Hippolytus (c.170-236) vigorously attacked Zephyrinus and Callistus for their Modalism, though Hippolytus was himself accused of Di-theism because he apparently attributed development to the Logos in the incarnation. During this period Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch 260-272 CE taught that Jesus gradually became divinized through his moral perfection as a result of the Logos resting upon him. Tertullian (c.160 - c.220 CE) in North Africa vigorously opposed Modalism, as did Novatian at Rome at about 250 CE. Subsequently, all orthodoxy, including the Nicene Creed, Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Hilary, Augustine and others both in the East and in the West, rejected Modalism as heresy. The terms Modalism, Monarchianism, Modalistic Monarchianism, Sabellianism and Patripassianism are virtually interchangeable.

5.4.5 In his *Against Praxeas* written about 213 CE, Tertullian says that on the Modalist premise the Logos has no independent existence, the Father becomes his own Son in the Virgin's womb, and the Father therefore suffered, died, and rose again. He follows this with his famous aphorism that Praxeas did a two-fold service for the Devil at Rome, *he put to flight the Paraclete and he crucified the Father* (Ch. 1).

5.4.6 As to Modalist Christology says Tertullian, the result is to separate the eternal Christ from the historical Jesus (Ch. 27). It is essential to salvation that Jesus be seen to be the Christ; that the historical person is indeed God incarnate (*Apology* 21):

5.4.7 *This ray of God, then, as it was always foretold in ancient times, descending into a certain virgin, and made flesh in her womb, is in his birth God and man united. The flesh formed by the Spirit is nourished, grows up to manhood, speaks, teaches, works, and is the Christ.*

- 5.4.8 Tertullian then outlines the life of Christ in detail as an historical reality, accomplishing his mission through his humanity, including his death on the Cross. The Gospel embraces the humanity of Christ. The Christian message concerns actions of the incarnate Lord who is sent by the Father and the two must not be confused.
- 5.4.9 Modalist use of Scripture at the time is unsurprising. They focused upon texts which declare the unity of God, such as *Exodus* 20:3; *Isaiah* 44:6; *John* 10:30, 14:8-11; *Romans* 9:5 and *1 Corinthians* 8:6. These texts do not prove the Modalist case. Trinitarians could use them just as well. Hippolytus' charge that the Modalists used them in a one-sided fashion is an apt and modern comment on valid exegesis.
- 5.4.10 In his *Refutation of All Heresies* 5, Hippolytus attributes the following to Noetus as the styling of God by the names Father and Son according to the vicissitudes of the times: *When indeed, then, the Father had not been born, he yet was justly styled Father; and when it pleased him to undergo generation, having been begotten, he himself became his own son, not another's.* The improbable logic of this, Hippolytus says, is that at Christ's baptism the Father was asking humanity to behold himself, that the Father was in fact nailed to the Cross, that on the Cross the Father commended his Spirit to himself, and that the Father raised himself on the third day. The structure of the Gospel story simply does not work on this premise. It is reduced to nonsense. Hence the logic and Gospel vitality of Trinitarian theology.
- 5.4.11 So far as the Incarnation is concerned, Modalism is fundamentally a denial of history. The Christian Gospel entails factual historical assertions. There is no hint in the New Testament that the shape of the Gospel fits a metamorphosed God. That Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh and that he was sent by the Father distinguishes Father and Son and, as well, shows that the genuine complete humanity of Christ is essential to redemption.
- 5.4.12 A century later, in attacking the Modalist concept, Athanasius said that to hold a Son-Father theology in essence destroys the existence of the Son (*Statement of Faith* 2). And when he defended Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius remarked that in Upper Libya Modalist bishops *were so successful with their opinions that the Son of God was scarcely any longer preached in the churches.* Modalism, like its modern Unitarian counterpart, attacks the foundations of the Gospel because it is essentially a denial that the historical Jesus is the eternal Son of God incarnate.

#### 5.5.0 **The Subordination Paradigm: Arians.**

- 5.5.1 Through much of the fourth century CE, at the height of the Constantinian era and popularity of Christianity, the most religiously widespread and politically powerful non-orthodox movement was Arianism. For a time it bid fair to take over the Christian church. It has even been suggested that Arianism failed because Arius its leader (c.250-336) died at a relatively early stage of the power struggle which followed the Council of Nicea in 325, while his fellow-Alexandrian Athanasius (c.296-373) lived long enough and endured the disfavor of Arian-oriented Emperors and five banishments to win the day for orthodoxy. On the other side, a strong case can be made for the view that despite political and religious powers arrayed against the orthodox view, not the least of which included the Emperor's wish for peace from Athanasius' alleged rabble-rousing, the instincts of Christian people led them to oppose Arianism: Only God can save, they believed. If Jesus Christ is less than God incarnate then the Mediator has not been found. This single, key concept finally won the victory for the orthodox cause. Despite the use of political power (which included the military) and evidence of deep personal animosities which evoked all sorts of nastiness, including Athanasius' own tactics at times, the populism which shielded Athanasius and preserved orthodoxy had a deep theological root.

- 5.5.2 The uniqueness of the Arian view was to push the Christological question back to the origin of the Logos. While other views which were held to be aberrant struggled with the divine-human correlation in incarnation, the Arian view asked: *Who and what is the Logos?* Their conclusion was that the Logos is not, indeed cannot be, of the same essence as God himself. This concept rules Jehovah's Witness understanding in our time.
- 5.5.3 Arius, probably of Libyan birth, was educated at Antioch. Following ordination he became priest of Baucalis, one of the larger Alexandrian churches, where he drew large crowds because of his preaching and ascetic life style. Around 318-319 he attracted attention for a subordinationist view of the person of Christ. The controversy between him and the Bishop, Alexander, became heated, though there is some evidence that at the first Alexander sought to mediate between Arius and his critics in Alexandria. Arius enjoyed support from many. A schism threatened and it appears that later, following a brief banishment, Arius did in fact found a separatist congregation in Alexandria. In any event, Alexander convened a synod at Alexandria around 324 and excommunicated Arius and his followers.
- 5.5.4 Meanwhile, the Emperor Constantine had moved to the East. In order to quiet unrest and avert schism at Alexandria, Constantine in 324 sent Hosius (Ossius), Bishop of Cordova, to mediate the dispute. On Hosius' recommendation, and partly because Hosius himself was concerned about Arius' views, Constantine convened the Council of Nicea in May 325 to settle the dispute. For a recent discussion of the uncertain chronology of events leading up to Nicea see R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search For The Christian Doctrine of God*, 1988, pp.129-138.
- 5.5.5 Where does Athanasius fit into this? He was educated at the Catechetical School in Alexandria, his native city. At age twenty-nine he was already deacon and secretary to Alexander, and assisted him at the Council of Nicea in 325. He succeeded Alexander as Bishop in 328 at about the early age of thirty-two. His earliest work *Against the Heathen and On the Incarnation* are usually regarded as two books. *On the Incarnation* is probably the most significant and influential work in the Christian Church apart from the Bible. Whether one accepts that Athanasius wrote it in about 318 while still in his early twenties or, as is more likely, later when he was in his mid-thirties makes little difference to its remarkable standing and influence. Athanasius is the key figure in the triumph of the orthodox cause in the Church despite the odds against him due to Imperial opposition.
- 5.5.6 Very little of what Arius wrote, or is said to have written, has survived. While the literature on late Patristic Christology is large, it is essential that careful attention be paid to Arius' own words. What little has survived is readily accessible:
- 5.5.7 1. Arius Letter to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, about 318: in Theodoret, *Church History* 1.5, and Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, 1946, p.55.
- 5.5.8 2. Arius' Letter to Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, about 320: in E. R. Hardy, *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 1954, p. 332.
- 5.5.9 3. Arius' Letter to Constantine, about 327: in Socrates, *Church History*, 1.26.
- 5.5.10 4. Extracts from Arius' *Thalia*, probably written 318-319, which was his theological statement expressed in verse: in Athanasius, *On the Synods of Arminum and Seleucia (de Synodis)*, 15-16. Because Athanasius was Arius' inveterate enemy legitimate questions can be raised. First, whether Athanasius has accurately reported Arius' text? Second, whether lack of context skews understanding of the extracts? Nevertheless, continuity between the thought of the extracts and the other surviving texts of Arius and

tertiary materials about him suggest that these extracts are part of a common theological perspective.

5.5.11 5. The Statement of Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, about the dispute, including the Arian Syllogism, and his ecumenical letter to the Christian churches: in Socrates, *Church History* 5-6. The Syllogism is also available in Bettenson, p. 56.

5.5.12 6. R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 1988, furnishes translations of some of the segments, along with terminological comment. Hanson's study of the fourth century is the most thorough of recently published work.

5.5.13 What did Arius and the Arians teach?

5.5.14 I begin with a summary of the Arian view: Christ existed before the Incarnation. He is the instrument God used to create the world. As the highest created being within the counsels of God and as the agent of creation he is worthy of worship. But he had a beginning of existence. Therefore he cannot be God in the sense of sharing the nature of the Supreme Being. He is like God, but is not of the same reality (substance) as God. He is transcendent and God-like, but is not God incarnate. He is the first order of created beings, the heavenly Logos manifest in the flesh. Extrapolation follows:

5.5.15 **First**, and foremost, is Arius' conception that God (I do not think that Arius can properly speak of a Godhead, though he does, but only in terms of a derivative from the unduplicable Monad) is absolutely One, indivisible, perfect, immutable, without limit, eternal. In the Letter to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, he says *that God had an existence prior to that of his Son*. The terms used indicate that God is without beginning, without prior first principle, and that this *prior-ness* and *limitlessness* has to do with his own Son. Several sentences later, he complains that he is persecuted *because we say that the Son had a beginning, but that God is without beginning*.

5.5.16 **Second**, this leads to the next point which is that on Arius' view God's Fatherhood is a function of the origin of the Son, not a way of understanding the truth about God's essential nature.

5.5.17 At this juncture it is useful to inject the points which are anathematized at the end of the Creed of Nicea; namely,

*those who say*

1. *There was when he (Christ) was not*
2. *Before he was begotten he was not*
3. *He came into being from what-is-not*

*Or, who say that the Son of God is*

4. *Of another hypostasis or substance*
5. *or, Created*
6. *or, Changeable*
7. *or, Alterable*

*These the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.*

5.5.18 These points are evidently stock phrases of the Arian theology. Their sense is evident in Arius' excoriating of orthodox teaching at the beginning of the Letter to Alexander. He complains that Alexander,

*has driven us out of the city as atheists, because we do not concur in what he publicly preaches, namely, God always, the Son always; as the Father so the Son; the Son co-exists unbegotten with God; He is everlasting; neither by thought nor by any interval does God precede the Son; always God, always Son; he is begotten of the unbegotten; the Son is of God himself.*

5.5.19 **Third**, Arius then adds a confession of faith to the above in positive terms. He says that the nature of the Son is not that of the unoriginate Monad, but is a perfect creature:

*But we say and believe, and have taught, and do teach, that the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way part of the unbegotten; and that he does not derive his subsistence from any matter; but that by his own will and counsel he has subsisted before time, and before ages, as perfect God, only begotten and unchangeable, and that before he was begotten, or created, or purposed, or established, he was not. For he was not unbegotten.*

5.5.20 In the *Thalia* extract (in Athanasius, *Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*, 16) Arius specifically states that the Son is a perfect creature (*ktisma*), but is not like a Gnostic emanation (*probolon*), nor a Manichean portion of the Father (*meros homoousion*), nor a Sabellian Sonfather divided Monad, nor as a light lighted by and then removed away from a lamp flame, nor a Son made by creaturely begetting, but created by the will of God before time, having received life and being from the Father. God cannot divest himself of his own unoriginate principle. Therefore the eternal Monad is the cause of the three existing realities, before time. The Son is not eternal or co-eternal or co-originate with the Father.

5.5.21 **Fourth**, the uniqueness of Arius' view is his attempt to separate the origin of the Son from ordinary generation or procreation. It is a unique kind of generation, before time. When Arius says *there was when the Son was not* he omits the word time. He means before the creation of the world, of which time is a function. The origin of the Logos is different from the origin of creatures in space and time.

5.5.22 **Fifth**, Arius' positive formulation and what was for him apparently a key element was his teaching about Christ as Savior. Recently, two American scholars, R. C. Gregg and D. E. Groh have proposed rehabilitation of Arius along these lines (in their joint work, *Early Arianism*, 1981; and, Gregg's editing of *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments*, 1983).

5.5.23 In their original much-discussed paper, *The Centrality of Soteriology in Early Arianism*, read at the 1975 International Patristics Conference in Oxford, they argue that the key feature of Arius' theology is salvation rather than the metaphysics of the nature of the Logos. The case they make is this:

5.5.24 1. Fatherhood and Sonship concern relationship more than ontology so as to comprise an analogue of the believer's filial relationship with God. This suggests filial dependence, not the orthodox mutuality of being.

5.5.25 2. The key property of the Son is not being but will. Arius rejects Athanasius' view that the divine nature must control the Son's will; rather, his alterability is proportionate to his obedience which is unchangeable in virtue of the Son's affection for the Father. Changeability is only a theoretical possibility.

5.5.26 3. The true meaning of Sonship is sonship by moral advance: thus Christ's sonship and ours are the same. Athanasius vigorously protests (*Defence of the Nicene Definition* 20), but the force of the Arian view is there. The commonality is between Christ and us, not between the essence of the Father and the Son. Our likeness to Christ is a copy, Athanasius agrees; but it is unlike the uniqueness of Christ's being of the essence of the Father. Athanasius distinguishes two senses of the word Son: a son by obedience and a begotten son. Arius' key feature concept is that of virtue, of moral improvement. This idea is embedded in Athanasius' criticism when speaking of the first sense of sonship (8):

*If in the first, which belongs to those who gain the name by grace from moral improvement, and receive power to become sons of God (for this is what their predecessors said), then he would seem to differ from us in nothing; no, nor would he be Only-begotten as having obtained the title of Son as others from his virtue.*

Gregg and Groh add that this put people into the same arena of life as the Lord.

5.5.27 Gegg and Groh's interpretation moves us along the way toward a fuller understanding of Arius. It focuses on a key motif, namely, the nature of salvation. This understanding is strengthened in view of the contradictory salvific emphasis in Athanasius' *On The Incarnation*, and the misgivings of the troubled Christian community about Arian theology. It points to the interplay between the Christian understanding of salvation and the Christian understanding of the nature of God.

5.5.28 Is the key qualification of the Savior moral advancement and does salvation for us mean imitation of his virtue? Is this the way of salvation or is it by the atoning death of the incarnate Son on the Cross? Arius' view is that Christ *was made God by participation* (*Four Discourses Against the Arians*, 1.9). Athanasius contends that if Jesus is an ordinary man, then let him advance (in virtue); *but if he be God bearing flesh, as he truly is, and 'the Word became flesh', and being God descended on earth, what advance had he who existed equal to God?* (Note also *Councils of Arminum and Seleucia*, 15, where the term advance is used again.)

5.5.29 Arius' thesis is attractive but misses a critical element of the apostolic Gospel. G. C. Stead comments on Gregg and Groh's work (*Journal of Theological Studies*, 33:1982, pp. 285-289): *Arian soteriology was a redeemer, obedient to the Creator's will, whose life modeled perfect creaturehood and hence the path of salvation for all Christians*. That path, for Arius, is advance in moral virtue to sonship. The question is, even if Arius' conception of advance does not imply previous imperfection, does this square with the apostolic doctrine of the eternal Word made flesh?

5.5.30 The metaphysical issue concerning the nature of the Logos and the meaning of the incarnation is indeed crucial. It cannot be subsumed to the salvation issue because the very possibility as well as the nature of salvation depends upon the answer. Who is the pre-incarnate Logos? Arius insisted upon a univocal sense of 'begetting' with reference to Jesus Christ being the 'only begotten Son'. On one reading of 'begotten', whatever is begotten of God must derive from a creative act, not from the being of God. Hence it has a beginning of existence. Therefore the Son is not coeternal with the Father.

5.5.31 Fastening upon the term 'begotten', Arius said that because Christ is begotten he must have had a beginning. Athanasius countered that because Christ is begotten of the Father, he could not have had a beginning. To say that a father begets a child is one thing, but to say that the Father beget the Son is another. The one is temporal, the other eternal; the one is of the will, the other from the being of the Father. Thus the Nicene Creed insisted that Christ is of the substance of the Father, thereby sacrificing neither the impassibility of God nor the deity of the Son.

5.5.32 For earlier comment on these topics see also my essays: Arianism, Athanasian Creed, Christology, Monarchianism, Neoplatonism, Sabellianism, Subordinationism, and Trinity in *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, J. D. Douglas, ed., 1974.

### **Modern Christological Controversy**

5.6.0 **Incarnation as Myth.**

- 5.6.1 It is important from the standpoint of confessional Christianity to keep things in focus. That focus is inevitably theological, which entails troubling philosophical questions. With regard to the Christian focus, the comments of P. T. Forsyth, written during an earlier phase of the modern skeptical quest about the historical Jesus seem particularly appropriate. Salvation, he says, is neither illumination nor imitation. It is redemption in and by the Cross of the Incarnate Lord. Like Athanasius, Forsyth insists that only God can save. History and theology combine to reflect the truth of who Jesus Christ is, and the truth of the Gospel makes impossible anything less. If we are to believe at all, the Gospel calls us to believe not *like* Jesus but *in* Jesus. The crux is (*The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, 1909, republished 1953, pp. xv, 54, 59):
- 5.6.2 *...between a revelation and the revelation in him. The great issue is the superhistoric finality of Christ. That is the true nature of his Godhead ... The Gospel of Jesus made the Religion of Jesus impossible ... Jesus was not the first Christian ... The essence of Christianity is Jesus Christ, the historic Redeemer and Lord and God, dwelling in his Church's faith. I have already said that there never was a time, even in the Church's earliest days, when Christianity was but a reproduction of the personal faith of Jesus, or the effort to live by his ethic. It was always a faith in Jesus concentric with the Church's faith in God.*
- 5.6.3 Christianity, said Forsyth, is a theological religion or nothing, and a church without a theology is a net-full of gas. This incarnational core is again in the forefront of theological debate, now dismissed as myth. The current mood is that there is no God 'out there,' that if He exists he must be inward, that there is no supernatural, that there can not really be any divine intervention in history and, hence, that the incarnation is unintelligible myth. Less text and more context, less history and more hermeneutic, have yielded themes of Jesus as Leader and Revolutionary, or themes of Reconstruction and Renewal, but all of this misses the religion of the atoning sacrifice of Christ which is integral to the truth of the Incarnation. Can an incarnational theology be defended?
- 5.6.4 Mythologizing the Incarnation is a powerful contemporary impulse. Consider the previously cited work of Thomas Sheehan, *How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity*, 1987. Although a Roman Catholic, he claims that there is little evidence for Roman Catholic (which means Nicene) dogma about Christ. Jesus proclaimed the incarnation of God not in himself but through radicalized ethics, by which Sheehan means God actualized in lives of justice and mercy. The task of the Church, he adds, is to put itself out of business, analogous to the way Jesus put himself out of business and to concentrate instead upon the mystery of what it means to be human. Incarnation means human fulfillment in terms of radical ethics contemporary with each generation. The story of Jesus epitomizes the on-going tension between organized religion and the immediately felt presence of God. Cullen Murphy recounts a conversation with Sheehan who expressed puzzlement at the refusal of scholars to draw conclusions about Jesus: *They say, Yes, the scholarship says this, or that, or the other, but I still believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, he existed from all eternity. They continue to incant the myth* (*Atlantic*, December 1986, p. 57).
- 5.6.5 In its contemporary form Incarnation as Myth is a concept specific to theologians of key theological faculties in the United Kingdom, whose ideas have spread to the United States. The movement is not specifically part of the Bultmanian demythologizing school, though some think so because of the parallel emphasis upon myth. The seminal work, and precursor to the subsequent controversy over the issue, is the book edited by S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton in 1972, *Christ, Faith and History*. Popular interest in the concept and strong opposition arose with the publication in 1977 of *The Myth of God Incarnate*, edited by John Hick, who has ever since been regarded as a key figure in the movement. While recent literature on Incarnation as Myth - or even Christology as Myth - is large, it is important to pin-point key players and monographs.

Most of those who contributed to the Sykes-Clayton volume have been prominent in the movement subsequently, including contributions to the *Myth of God Incarnate*.

5.6.6

These include John Hick, Michael Goulder and Frances Young of Birmingham, Don Cupitt of Cambridge, and Maurice Wiles of Oxford. In that dialogue Leslie Houlden of London attempted to defend incarnational theology on grounds of belief and emotion as prior to later creedal formulation. Dennis Nineham of Oxford contributed an epilogue in which he raises questions as to whether displacing the Incarnation (the metaphysical uniqueness of Jesus) with the concept of Jesus' unique moral perfection (the chief net positive result claimed by the Myth School) leaves us any better off in view of the fact that moral uniqueness is no more historically verifiable than metaphysical uniqueness. No major defense of traditional incarnational theology is mounted in this volume. In effect, the debate appears to be conceded to the mythographers. The strongest statement is by Nineham who allows that there are several Christologies in the New Testament and that perhaps the best we can do is to ask whether he is *the main figure through whom God launched men into a relationship with himself so full and rich that, under various understandings and formulations of it, it has been, and continues to be, the salvation of a large proportion of the human race?* (p. 202-203). The meaning of Incarnation becomes Jesus the pattern of awareness of God's presence.

5.6.7

The debate widened with the publication of *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, edited by Michael Goulder and published in 1979. The list of mythographers was enlarged to include Maurice Wiles of Oxford and Nicholas Lash of Cambridge. Serious questions are raised by biologist John Rodwell from a Popperian standpoint, especially the tendency of some mythographers to discredit a thesis (such as the Nicene Christology) on grounds of the vagaries associated with its formulation, and misplaced anxiety about models, failing to recognize the unverifiable nature of their own theses and models. It is simply not true that myths can have no truth claims even if the Incarnation be deemed to be myth, he said. The most vigorous apologist for confessional theology in this volume is Brian Hebblethwaite who, along with defending the truth of the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity, asked whether a mythographer could still be a Christian? The sum up of the colloquium by the Oxford philosopher Basil Mitchell is a model of analysis, in which he reviews issues and methods and concludes that he does not believe the mythographers have made a sufficiently strong case either of criticism of traditional Incarnation Theology or of their own positive thesis as to who Christ is and what his significance in history and for the Church is.

5.6.8

One other author, H. D. Lewis of London, is particularly noteworthy in the early years of the debate. In four lectures at Knox College in the University of Toronto in 1979 (*Jesus in the Faith of Christians*, 1981), Lewis probes the myth question philosophically and confessionally. On the confessional side he raises the question as to whether Incarnation as Myth implies prevarication on the part of those who read the creed in church on Sunday but then deny it on Monday in the classroom. Christianity, he says, is not merely God-consciousness, which puts it into the inter-faith and world religions mix. Rather, it is the profession of belief in the truth of the apostolic witness confirmed in Christ's disclosure in our human experience *that there must be an absolute identity of the being of Jesus and God* (p.73).

5.6.9

The influence of the mythographers has been significant. I leave it for others to document that in relation to controversies which erupted within several major Christian denominations in Britain and beyond. I point out only that during the past fifteen years a significant literature has emerged on the questions raised and the flow gives no sign of easing. A key study is that of R. P. C. Hanson on the Incarnation and Trinity theology of the Nicene Age, which I have previously cited. Other studies include: Thomas F. Torrance, *The Incarnation*, 1981. A. T. Hanson, *The Image of the Invisible God*, 1982. Russell F. Aldwinckle, *Jesus - A Savior or The Savior*, 1982. C. E. Gunton, *Yesterday*

*and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology*, 1983. Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Incarnation*, 1987. Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 1993.

5.6.10 What are major contentions and proposals of the Incarnation as Myth School? Instead of detailed individual analyses of several writers, I purpose to summarize key issues which they raise and, hopefully, objectively state their proposal for understanding the meaning of Incarnation.

5.6.11 **First**, mythographers allege that doctrinal pluralism within the Christian community historically and theological discontinuity undercut the idea of one received doctrine of the Incarnation. This is a strange and unconvincing argument. Mythographers question that there is such a thing as a consistent, coherent, recognizable and continuous body of Christian teaching which can be designated a, or the, doctrine of the Incarnation. This contention is based historically on the severe differences among Christians leading up to and following formulation of the Nicene Creed, and upon more recent New Testament studies which trace several different Christological modalities, such as the various names and titles of Christ.

5.6.12 No Christian who is committed to the Incarnation tradition of the Christian Church can yield on this point: the doctrinal and liturgical confessions of the Church reflect a seamless continuity of faith that Jesus is the Son of God come in the flesh. Anyone remotely familiar with patristic liturgy and theology and, as well, with the doctrines, liturgy and hymnody of most any Christian Church today will attest to mother-themes of doctrinal continuity which have nurtured faith in the incarnate Lord.

5.6.13 The parallels between the confession of faith in Christ the incarnate Son of God of, say, Greek early church hymns and modern hymn writers are clear. For example: the hymns of Isaac Watts (1674-1748) such as *Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun* and *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*; John Newton (1725-1807), *How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds* and *Amazing Grace*; and, Charles Wesley (1707-1788), *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* and *O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing my Great Redeemer's Praise*. Anyone who has grown up in any of the confessional Christian traditions recognizes, as a child has an instinct for its mother, the incarnation faith which has nourished him or her spiritually. Failure to discern historical continuity going back to the New Testament is simply error; assertion that it does not exist is nonsense.

5.6.14 Consider a pagan parallel. Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus is beautiful poetic expression of Stoic philosophy in praise of the divine Logos which pervades and is reflected in the rationality of the universe. To quote but a few lines, Cleanthes says:

*O God most glorious, called by many a name,  
Nature's great King, through endless years the same;  
Omnipotence, who by thy just decree  
Controllest all, hail, Zeus, for unto thee  
Behoves thy creatures in all lands to call.*

...

*Pulsates through all that Nature brings to light;  
Vehicle of the universal Word, that flows  
Through all, and in the light celestial glows  
Of stars both great and small. A King of Kings  
Through ceaseless ages, God, whose purpose brings  
To birth, whate'er on land or in the sea  
Is wrought, or in high heaven's immensity...*

5.6.15 There is no doubt about the continuity of this with Stoic Logos doctrine taught by Zeno or Marcus Aurelius, or with modern Stoic-like views which find a principle of impersonal divine rationality inherent in the universe.

- 5.6.16 Thus when Clement of Alexandria (c.150-215) writes in praise of Christ, his thought harmonizes with the songs of Christians down through the ages, such as those of Watts, Newton or Wesley. Clement's language is not unlike that of Cleanthes, but it has a specific Christology in view, namely, the concept of the Logos-incarnate. I cite a part of Clement's *Hymn to Christ* (A. W. Chatfield, *Songs and Hymns of Earliest Greek Christian Poets*, 1876, p. 155):

*O Thou, the King of saints, all-conquering Word,  
Son of the Highest, wisdom's Fount and Lord,  
The prop that doth uphold through toil and pain;  
The joy of ages through immortal reign;  
Yet born of mortal flesh for life's brief span,  
O Saviour Jesus, Shepherd, Husbandman;  
Helm Thou to guide, and bridle to restrain,  
Wing of the holy flock that heaven would gain;  
Catcher of men from evil's whelming sea,  
The holy fishes, saved that are to be,  
Drawn from the billowy deep with sweetest lure  
Of life that shall for evermore endure:  
O holiest Shepherd of enlightened sheep,  
Lead Thou Thy flock the upward heavenly steep;  
O King of holy children, lead the way,  
And pure may they both follow and obey!  
Thou art, O Christ, the living heavenly Way,  
The ever-flowing Word, unchanging Day,  
Eternal Light, and mercy's healthful Spring;  
The Perfecter of every virtuous thing;  
Pure Life of all the happy ransomed throng  
Who hymn their God through all the ages long.*

- 5.6.17 It is sheer, unwarranted speculation to conjecture that Christianity would have evolved with a different Christology had it moved East or South and not West in the Ancient world. The consistency and continuity of Christology within the believing community is simply too strong for that to have happened and, in fact, historically it has not happened.

- 5.6.18 **Second**, Mythographers claim that the concept of Incarnation is myth which cannot be taken as literal truth; that the concept is incoherent, illogical and scientifically impossible for the modern mind to accept. I refer the reader to my earlier chapter on Theological Method, particularly the arguments of Karl Popper on scientific method. He argues that metaphor is essential to scientific enquiry. On the essential nature of reality empiricist language is largely mythological, or metaphorical. For example, what is matter, or energy?

- 5.6.19 The situation is not dissimilar in Theology. The concept of Incarnation is no more incoherent as a point of departure for discussion than a mythographer's thesis that Jesus is in some sense a morally unique human being. The early creeds did not purport to solve the mystery of the Incarnation; they merely (but importantly) set the parameters of discussion. At issue is linkage between the metaphor and the reality. Metaphor can convey, or aspire to convey, that which is actually the case.

- 5.6.20 Incarnation entails that the second person of the Trinity who is metaphorically called the Logos is the eternal Son made flesh in a factual sense. There is a correlation between the metaphor Logos and the historical reality Jesus. From that point on we have to ask whether we know enough either about human nature or the divine nature to say what it takes for God to become man, or to deny the possibility. Given sufficient reason

for accepting metaphor and paradox, they are not a hindrance to knowledge, nor need they be to faith. The role of myth and metaphor can serve to indicate the truth about something around us for which no empirical verification is possible. In this respect the late Leonard Hodgson's question is apt: "What must the truth have been and be if men such as they were (the Apostles and earliest Christians) spoke as they did?"

5.6.21 **Third**, mythographers attempt to attribute uniqueness to Jesus on a naturalistic footing apart from him being specifically, historically and personally the revelation of God. The theology of Incarnation as Myth eschews special revelation. The naturalistic foundation they assume allows to Jesus no more than his being an ordinary person who ended life tragically or perhaps, as Albert Schweitzer suggested, as the victim of his own illusions.

5.6.22 The mythographers allow a special moral, exemplarist status to Jesus, but only paradigmatically, not metaphysically; as a parable on how in life to understand our own relationship to God and our inevitable disappointments and suffering. Like the ancient Gnostics, the mythographers are offended by the concept of the impassible God becoming incarnate and, further, are offended by the concept of an indispensable, single, historical intermediary.

5.6.23 The sense of divine immediacy is the goal of Christian understanding, not historical revelation as to a divine purpose in Christ and his Cross. Mythographers posit that the meaning of Incarnation is contemporary immediacy of the felt presence of God, not the essential role of a substitutionary, mediatorial sacrifice. Like Arius, they fall back on an exemplarist Jesus on grounds that metaphysically the concept of Incarnation is an impossible one. But they do not thereby avoid metaphysical questions nor do they cope adequately with the theology of the Apostolic witness. They are left with the question of how an impassible divinity can suffer, if indeed God is suffering in and with us in Jesus. Nor is it at all clear why the suffering of Jesus shows God's love. Why cannot a case be made that Jesus' sufferings demonstrate divine indifference? That God's love is disclosed in Christ is clear only as enshrined revelationally in the Apostolic witness which attests to the truth that the meaning of the Cross is sacrifice and atonement.

5.6.24 It is not within the scope of this study to map the further progress of the Incarnation as Myth movement nor to predict its fortunes. Religiously, it has run its course. If most Christians cannot cope with the skeptical questions which have been raised, and if critical rejoinders to the Myth movement have been heard only long after public unrest was created, it is nevertheless true today, as in the case of the fourth century Alexandrian population as they pondered the apparently impeccable logic of Arius, that Christian instinct conserves the faith. This has as much to do with skepticism about the arguments advanced as it may have, as is sometimes charged, with obscurantism, inertia or credulity.

5.6.25 As in the fourth century, the question has been moved by the mythographers from metaphysics and redemption, i.e., from what could it mean for the eternal Word to be made flesh to die on the Cross, to education, nurture and example. Incarnation is propaedeutic and proleptic. The meaning of Jesus in history is that a lesson is being taught about God's presence with us, and that an example is being set for us to follow, on how to bear loss, tragedy and death in a naturalistic, evolutionary context in which humanity is finally coming to full spiritual maturity. The concepts Revelation, Incarnation and Uniqueness are educating myths in a religion (Christianity) which, on a par with all other world religions, allows us to cherry-pick what appears to us to be the best for our moral advancement.

5.6.26 If Christ represents merely moral advance, then Christians today must say, as did their counterparts in the fourth century, that the Redeemer has not been found.

5.6.27 John Hick, a key figure in the Incarnation as myth movement, has in recent years shifted his emphasis (he would surely wish to say advanced his concept) of myth from metaphor which attempts metaphysical description to myth as metaphor which conveys a moral tale. All theological discourse is myth, he says. Myths are not literally true; they serve a practical function. In his early book *Evil and the God of Love* (1966) Hick interpreted the problem of evil not in relation to the question how can there be evil and suffering if God is all-powerful? but to cosmic process. He adopts the *paidagogus* model; the world is a school through which we pass on the way to spiritual maturity. Evil is justified by the good of growth to maturity, away from our evolution-produced egocentricity to greater concern for others. Jesus fits that model. He exemplifies it. Myths serve the interests of individual and social transformation.

5.6.28 In this process, says Hick, world religions are on a par. Christianity is not absolute and its myths are simply culture-bound and culture-specific tools to educate that segment of humanity which comes under their influence. In other places other tools (myths) may be equally appropriate, useful and therefore valid. Religions are indeed absolute but, as Ernst Troeltsch said, only relative to their own adherents (*Disputed Questions*, 1993, p. 77).

5.6.29 In the present and coming world order, he says, it is crucial to accept that no longer does Christianity have as it claimed to have during medieval times, a monopoly of salvific truth and life, whether of the Roman Catholic type (only within the Church) or the Protestant type (only within Christian faith). He regards the claim to the uniqueness of Christ and Christian salvation to be a destructive assumption of Christian superiority which we must transcend in favor of appreciation of other great world traditions. To this those who confess traditional Christian beliefs reply that as important as appreciation of culture and traditions is, it cannot obscure the truth issue.

5.6.30 Hick's view is that Jesus did not teach that he was the Son of God. The three central doctrines of Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement cohere but need reinterpretation as the presence of the Spirit to stimulate God-consciousness in Jesus (a modern form of Adoptionism). Incarnation has occurred and continues to occur in many ways in many religions by means of many mythologies. Such an inspiration Christology allows for a pluralistic understanding of the place of Christianity in the world, he says. Its impact will be upon the self-giving love of the Cross, not the divisive claim to transcendental uniqueness. For Hick, the wave of the future must have three foci (p. 98-99): First, an inspiration, inclusive Christology. Second, a theology of political liberation and justice which can, for example, be present as much in Marxist movements as in Democracy or the Church. Third, feminist theology, that God is the source of life and meaning for women as truly as for men: *Openness to the wider religious life of humankind with its rich plurality of ways - female as well as male - of symbolizing the divine, can help to free us from the grip of an absolutised Christian patriarchalism*. It is remarkable how an attempt at major theological revision ends with contemporary banalities - with myopic, politically correct themes - as the hinge of history.

5.6.31 For Hick, Jesus represents not only an inspired prophet and teacher, but one who expresses *the divine love in action*. In the remarkable passage which follows, in which a totally biblically, psychologically or scientifically unverifiable thesis of psychic powers is advanced; terms which most any radically fundamentalist healer could use, Hick says (p. 38):

*It seems that when a human being is sufficiently attuned to the life of God, divinely established psychic laws can come into operation to produce 'miraculous' healings and providential coincidences. This was strikingly evident in the life of Jesus. Because he was so open and responsive to God's presence, the divine creativity flowed through his hands in bodily healing and was present in his personal impact upon people, with challenging and re-creating power.*

- 5.6.32                    Encounter with such a Jesus would have been, he says, a conversion experience. In what sense? It is a *deeply challenging call, a claim threatening to revolutionize our life, shattering our self-centred world of meaning and plunging us into the vast unknown universe of God's meaning*. The goal is to acquire a deep sense of the sovereign goodness and love of God *relieving us of anxiety for ourselves and empowering us to love*. Jesus' impact is exemplarist and existential.
- 5.6.33                    According to Hick, what are we to make of the traditional incarnation concept? He is fair to the parameters and intentions of the Nicene-Chalcedon intention even if he rejects them (p. 76) as a *humanly devised form of words which has no specifiable non-metaphorical meaning*. They confess *the unique personal presence of God in a human life, so that those who talked with Jesus were talking with God the Son*. He says this after rejecting Thomas Morris' attempt to conserve the Incarnation theology of Chalcedon by means of an a-symmetric accessing relation between two minds in Jesus in which the man Jesus was in effect being invisibly monitored by God the Son (*The Logic of God Incarnate*, 1986). More on Morris later.
- 5.6.34                    As he has done from the outset of the controversy generated by the Incarnation as Myth school, Hick maintains that any intelligible account of the divine Incarnation of Jesus will prove to be religiously unacceptable; which is to say more directly that Incarnation in the Nicene-Chalcedon sense is unintelligible. To claim that two natures, divine and human, are joined in one person is impossible logically, he says, and he can find no psychological language to express it convincingly. He argues that we must settle for an inspirational and exemplarist Christology. For Hick, Incarnation is a natural metaphor for Jesus' openness and obedience to God such that the divine love can be deemed to be incorporated in his words and actions.
- 5.6.35                    Questions remain. Has Hick an adequate view of the nature and function of metaphor in both theology and science, especially in regard to the relation of metaphor to the truth of statements which purport to state that which is actually the case? Has he exhausted the theoretical parameters of what a complex psychological unity may be (whether of the Trinity or the Incarnation)? Does the salvific paradigm he proposes, which is based upon his metaphorical understanding of Incarnation, answer to the confessions and instincts of Christians down through the ages?
- 5.6.36                    **How Modern is Modern?**
- 5.6.37                    Have we in modern Theology advanced beyond ancient attempts to formulate a doctrine of the Incarnation?
- 5.6.38                    Ebionite theory coincides with modern theories of Incarnation as Myth which carries a universal spiritual lesson of obedience to God. Modern theistic theory that knowledge of God and response to God centers in human response to demands of the ethical imperative parallels Ebionite stress on Jewish ceremonial obedience. However, this theory is in difficulty if social and political contextual studies produce a radicalized Jesus, especially in relation to the mandates of ceremonial religion.
- 5.6.39                    Adoptionist or Inspirational Christology has been the most attractive alternative for those in modern times who think highly of Jesus but cannot accept the conjoining of God and humanity in one person. The theology of John Hick is a prominent contemporary example of this. Obedience to God's will, especially the law of love even to the point of altruistic self-sacrifice, is enhanced by means of the concept of sonship. Incarnation means filial relationship with God. Jesus was chosen and anointed by God for a special task. His adoption to Servant-Sonship shows the possibilities of our own servant-sonship. Modern Inspirational, Exemplarist Christology appears to be little

different from the Arian view of Jesus' moral advance, though the latter did not attempt to be politically correct in relation to the cultural ethos of the times.

5.6.40 The intricacies of the Nestorian conception of personality and the manner in which the eternal Word is incarnate in human life is scarcely an issue for moderns if the incarnation is regarded as myth. The difficulties inherent in stating the metaphysical nature of such a union daunt modern theorists and make myth an easy solution. Since Chalcedon in 451 CE, the two major attempts at further discussion of the manner in which the divine and human natures are united are the post-Chalcedonian Monophysite Christology and nineteenth century Kenotic Christology.

5.6.41 Discussion of the Patristic controversies about the nature of Christ reinforces the conviction that the later Fathers reflect a correct instinct. They surmise that they did not know enough about either God or human nature to be able to set forth a metaphysics of incarnation. They felt bound by the perceived terms of the apostolic testimony about Christ. The Nicene and Chalcedonian confessions set the boundaries within which theorizing can appropriately take place, but they avoid theorizing as to what it takes for God to become man.

5.6.42 It is tempting to try; however, any formulation we attempt will inevitably be made in terms of the metaphysics and the psychology of human nature of the times. This is what Nestorius attempted to do. Modern attempts are little different. We think we know what it means to be human, but a cool look at modern theories of personhood suggests that long before we can say very much about what it takes for God to become man we need a much clearer understanding of and coherent statement about human nature.

5.6.43 In this respect Irenaeus may be correct to suggest that we must not judge the meaning of the incarnation by the standards of a broken humanity, but try to understand the image and likeness of God in humanity in terms of Christ's normative humanity as the Second Adam, the Last Man. This appears to be what many of the Church Fathers meant by the deification of humanity in the humanity of Christ. In modern times such a direction of thought is more apparent in Eastern Orthodox theology than in the West.

5.6.44 In his criticism of the Ebionites, Irenaeus says that they *reject the commixture of the heavenly wine and wish it to be water of the world only* (a reference to Ebionite Eucharist consecration of water alone, rather than wine mixed with water) *not receiving God so as to have union with Him but they remain in that Adam who had been conquered and was expelled from Paradise* (*Against Heresies* 5.1.3). He then adds:

5.6.45 *...so also, in the end times the Word of the Father and the Spirit of God, having become united with the ancient substance of Adam's formation, rendered man living and perfect, receptive of the perfect Father, in order that as in the natural Adam we all were dead, so in the spiritual we may all be made alive.*

5.6.46 Irenaeus is careful not to attempt a psychology of the divine-human union. His doctrine of the recapitulation of humanity in Christ is intended to affirm on the one side the reality of Christ's humanity and on the other the new racial beginning. Various terms in English attempt to render Irenaeus' meaning: divinization, divinization-union and divine-humanity (John Lawson), and divine-human blending. Irenaeus utilizes the Logos doctrine of John as the key feature of his theology, but it is couched in terms of the fullness of incorruptible humanity, not merely as the combining of divine and human elements. God becomes man. The divine and the human are inseparably united in Christ without confusion. Irenaeus' best phrases emphasize the wholeness of life: Christ *became what we are* to make us to be even what he is himself (*Against Heresies* 5.1.Preface). He takes great care to stress the genuine humanity of Christ, evident in Christ's humiliation, weakness, suffering and death. The historical reality of the unification of divinity with

humanity in Christ's life (as seen in his total obedience and sinlessness) is correlated in Irenaeus' thought with human growth toward the Second Adam ideal.

5.6.47 Earlier in this century P. T. Forsyth expressed this concept as the redintegration of humanity in Christ. One could wish that Irenaeus had attempted a more detailed statement of the nature of the union between God and humanity in the person of Christ, beyond that Christ *became what we are*, or through terms such as divinization or assimilation. The non-speculative, chaste terminology of the Fathers simply drew the boundaries established by the Apostolic witness. Within these boundaries is scope for theory. Irenaeus says,

5.6.48 *And then, again, this Word was manifested when the Word of God was made man, assimilating Himself to man, and man to Himself, so man might become precious to the Father. For in times long past, it was said that man was created after the image of God, but it was not (actually) shown; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image man was created. Wherefore also he did easily lose the similitude. When, however, the Word of God became flesh, He confirmed both these; for he both showed forth the image truly, since He became Himself what was His image; and he re-established the similitude after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word. (Against Heresies 5.16.2).*

## 5.7.0 **Patristic Christological Formulation**

5.7.1 It is time to turn to an exposition of traditional Patristic Christology. In our review of perspectives deemed to be deviations from the orthodox norm, indication was given of the complex political and religious environment during the fourth and fifth centuries within which attempts at theory and formulation took place. Detail of these political and theological machinations comprise a separate study. The best recent one is R. P. C. Hanson's *The Search for the Christian Understanding of God*, 1986. Note also J. N. D. Kelly's *Early Christian Creeds*, 1950; and, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 1958. The texts of key documents are available in T. H. Bindley's *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith* (Revised by F. W. Green, 1950). In the following, after reference to the Apostles Creed, I shall concentrate on key concepts of the Nicea-Chalcedon confessions, concepts which are at the heart of traditional Christian faith.

## 5.7.2 **The Rule of Faith and the Apostles Creed**

5.7.3 Was there an agreed upon, standard teaching about Christ, which could be called Catholic; Catholic, that is, in the sense of embedding the universal teaching of the Christian faith in formularies, not in the sense of Roman Catholic Papal claims to primacy or suzerainty in matters of faith and churchmanship? Was there - is there - a core of belief about Jesus Christ which has been consistently held, which reflects the apostolic kerugma and is a measure of the teachings of all church traditions which profess common faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God, whether Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, or Protestant Evangelical?

5.7.4 The earliest and, apparently widely used, formulary is the New Testament confession that *Jesus is Lord*. This attests to his divinity (*Acts* 11:17, 20; 16:31; *Romans* 10:9; *1 Corinthians* 12:3; *Philippians* 2:11; *Colossians* 2:6). His name and Lordship are on a footing of equality in the trinitarian Baptismal Formula (*Matthew* 28:19; *Acts* 19:5; *1 Corinthians* 6:11). He is the Christ come in the flesh (*Mark* 8:29, *1 John* 2:22). He is the Son of God (*Mark* 5:7, 3:11; *Romans* 1:3-4; *Hebrews* 4:14; *1 John* 4:15, 5:5). The early tradition is clear also from *Acts* 8:37, though that sentence is not in the oldest manuscripts. The parallels drawn between Father and Son are clear in formulae such as *1 Corinthians* 8:6. Paul says that while for others there are many "gods" and "lords,"

*yet for us there is one God, the Father,*

*from whom are all things and for whom we exist,  
and one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
through whom are all things and through whom we exist.*

5.7.5 This theme is repeated in passages such as *1 Timothy* 2:5-6 and 6:13-16, and in the status accorded to Jesus in Benedictions and Salutations such as *2 Peter* 1:2 and *John* 1:3. There is a core of belief, an irreducible body of teaching, and this concerns the truth of the eternal Son of God made flesh. The body of truth is called *The Faith* (*Galatians* 1:23, *1 Timothy* 6:20, *2 Timothy* 1:14, *Jude* 3, 20).

5.7.6 These are key sources for the Rule of Faith, or the Rule of our Tradition, which is a common formulary in the Church Fathers from as early as the middle of the second century through Augustine in the early fifth century, and beyond. Irenaeus speaks of the Rule of Faith which the apostles transmitted to church leadership (*Against Heresies* 1.10.1; 3.2.2; 3.3.2). As in the case of 'Jesus is Lord', The Rule of Faith at first was more a conversion-statement, a statement of personal faith at baptism, than its later primary function to identify correct doctrine. These were evangelistic instruments as much as confessional and creedal instruments, as H. E. W. Turner has shown in his Bampton Lectures of 1954 (*The Pattern of Christian Truth*). The issue was not merely creedal fixity but confessional kerugmatic integrity.

5.7.7 In the Apostolic Fathers it is easy to trace confession of faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God incarnate. Turner and others have detailed this in regard to the witness of *1 Clement*, *The Didache*, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Origen and, especially, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus.

5.7.8 Inevitably we are led to the Roman Church and Hippolytus (c.170 - c.236). His confession is all the more striking because he was a dissident, some would say schismatic, Pope who was anxious to defend apostolic truth against Sabellian influence within the hierarchy at Rome. In this, Hippolytus records words utilized as a Baptismal Confession which are parallel to those of the old Roman Creed, commonly known as the Apostles Creed. These are questions which were addressed to baptismal candidates as to their belief in *God, the Father Almighty*, and belief in *Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born of the Virgin Mary...* (B. S. Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 1962, p. 46).

5.7.9 The doctrinal points made by the early Church Fathers are remarkably consistent with the key tenet of incarnation theology that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God incarnate. This tradition has been universalized in the Old Roman symbol, the Apostles Creed, in the form recorded by Rufinus, who compared it with the one written by Marcellus as he left Rome to return to Ancyra after a period of banishment, due to Arian pressure. The two are mutually indistinguishable. It cannot be claimed that by means of the Apostles Creed Rome imposes its doctrinal will on all the Church. Rather, the Apostles Creed in its Roman form expresses cardinal truths of the faith which were universally held by orthodox Christians in the various formularies of local and regional churches. In this respect, the line between the significance and kerugmatic authority of the Rule of Faith and the Apostles Creed can be only faintly drawn. The Apostles Creed is:

5.7.10 *I believe in God Almighty; (Rufinus; God the Father Almighty)*

*and in Christ Jesus His only Son, our Lord,  
Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,  
Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried,  
on the third day rose again from the dead,  
ascended to heaven,  
sits at the right hand of the Father,*

*whence he will come to judge the living and the dead;*

*and in the Holy Spirit,  
the Holy Church,  
the remission of sins,  
the resurrection of the flesh,  
the life everlasting. (Rufinus omits this line.)*

5.7.11 It is this faith, in creedal form, which carried the Church to the Nicene Age. There Arius challenged the logic of Incarnation. Thereafter the Nicene Creed for over a century leading up to Chalcedon in 451 engaged church leaders on how to express authentically the Incarnation reality. In a revealing preamble to his confession of faith, Marcellus says that what he confesses is that which is taught out of the holy Scriptures. Confessional statements were intended to convey Apostolic truth which had been scripturally enshrined.

5.7.12 **Creating a Language for the Incarnation**

5.7.13 It has been alleged that the earliest Christian tradition was a simple Galilean faith which later became needlessly bogged down in Greek philosophical concepts and terms, and that these had nothing to do with its original simple concept of moral advance.

5.7.14 This is wrongheaded. Rather, the Incarnation and Trinity were realities looking for a language. The Greek philosophical schools did not have such concepts or a language which could natively express them. A vocabulary had to be redesigned to accommodate the new realities which were claimed to derive from divine revelation and action in history. The vocabulary available to them were the Greek metaphysical terms dealing with orders of being. For example, that the Stoic Schools, among others, variously employed the term Logos to identify a divine principle inherent in the cosmos has little to do genetically or conceptually with the doctrine of the Word made flesh, except the common point of departure that God must at least be some sort of divine rational principle.

5.7.15 Key terms which were employed, and much discussed as to their propriety and significance during the Incarnation and Trinity debates of the Nicea-Chalcedon age, are:

5.7.16 **Ousia** and **Homoousia** (*ovusi, a o`moousi`a*). *vOusia* means substance, being, essence or reality. The addition of the prefix *`omo* signifies "of the same kind." Use of the terms prior to and during the Nicene Age does not permit a distinct line to be drawn between certain ranges of meaning, such as that in pre-Nicea times they mean a concrete individual, an identity; but later a generic sense of being as that which underlies all individual entities. It is not known who introduced the use of *~omooousi, an* into the Creed of Nicea.

5.7.17 **Hypostasis** (*u`po, stasij*). Commonly, *u`po, stasij* means substance in the sense of a particular individual person or thing. In this respect, *ovusi, a* and *u`po, stasij* in pre-Nicene times had a common meaning. G. L. Prestige (*Fathers and Heretics*, 1940, pp.181-183) draws a fine distinction between two senses of *u`po, stasij*: first, individual person or object in the ordinary palpable sense of distinguishing one person or object from any other; and, second, individual person or object in respect of its inward nature, character or significance. This is the deeper sense of *ovusi, a*. In other words, the latter sense gives a peculiar, non-empirical sense, a metaphysical sense to "substance." *u`po, stasij* conveys that which essentially underlies and comprises the reality (the *ovusi, a*) of the individual entity which in normal use is called an *u`po, stasis*. When used of God and Christ both *ovusi, a* and *u`po, stasij* mean identity of substance or essence not in a numerical identity

sense, nor substance in the sense of resemblance in contrast to essence. The Son is of the same reality as the Father. He is identical with the Father as to his essential nature.

5.7.18 Objections were made to the use of both *ovusi,a* and *u`po, stasij*, not only because they appeared to import Greek metaphysics into theology, but because they could be used ambiguously. *VOusia* was used by the Sabellians to signify numerical identity between Father and Son, while *u`po, stasij* could be used for appearance, hence modalistically. Because of alleged Sabellian overtones, *o`moousij* had been rejected at the Council of Antioch in 269 C.E. Regarding both terms, Hanson says (p. 184-185):

5.7.19 *...several alternative ways of treating these terms were prevalent. They could be regarded as synonymous and used either to describe what God is as Three or what he is as One; or u`po, stasij could be used to describe the 'Persons' of the Godhead and ovusi,a either ignored or rejected; or u`po, stasij could be used for 'distinct existence' and ovusi,a or 'nature'; or a general state of indecision and uncertainty as to how either of them should be used could exist in a writer's mind.*

5.7.20 Nevertheless, a specific sense had to be attached to each of the terms so that they could convey the common Christian instinct as to the reality, distinctiveness and eternity of the Son. *~Upo, stasij*, at least, had some Biblical warrant for its use. While several New Testament occurrences signify confidence (2 *Corinthians* 9:4; 11:17; *Hebrews* 3:14), two passages in *Hebrews* parallel Nicene use. In 1:3 the writer uses it to define the essential nature of Christ in relation to the nature of God. Translators usually opt for *being* or *nature* to render *u`po, stasij*: the RSV renders the line, *He ... bears the very stamp of his nature*; while the NRSV says, *He ... is the exact imprint of God's very being*. The NIV says, *The Son is ... the exact representation of his being*. Here *u`po, stasij* is a metaphor for the divine nature or reality. In 11:1 the writer speaks of faith as the *assurance of things hoped for* (RSV and NRSV); *being sure of what we hope for* (NIV), though these do not better the old AV *the substance of things hoped for*. Here *u`po, stasij* is a metaphor for assurance, or what gives substance to hope. These uses in 1:3 and 11:1 highlight aspects of Prestige's distinctions. He says (p. 183):

5.7.21 *Now when the Council of Nicaea wanted to assert the equality of the divine Persons, it used the term that bore the inward reference. Though Father and Son are not one but two objects as seen in relation to each other - the names denote distinct presentations of the divine being - yet their 'substance' is identical: if you analyse the meaning connoted by the word God, in whatever connection, you arrive in every case at exactly the same result, whether you are thinking of the Father or of the Son or of the Spirit. That is the point at which the creed was directed: the word God connotes precisely the same truth when you speak of God the Father as it does when you speak of God the Son.*

5.7.22 The **Gen(n)etos** (gen[n]ht< j) terms concern origins. When the privative is added the concept of non-origin or eternity is meant. *Genhhto, j* means having come into existence; that is, mortal, changeable. *VAgenhhto< j* means that which never had a beginning; or, technically, that which has never not-existed. *Genhhto, j* means that which is generated or begotten seminally. *VAgenhhto< j* means that which is unbegotten, ingenerate; that is, not something that was (at some point) non-existent but is eternally existent. Unbegotten in the context of Nicene discussion means that God is ingenerate and that the Son is eternal.

5.7.23 **Prosopon** (prosw, pon) meant mask, hence could be used modalistically of the persons of the Trinity. In Nicene terminology *prosopon* and *hypostasis* are interchangeable. A *prosopon* is a particular, identifiable entity. In Hippolytus *persona* translates *prosopon*. It means distinct personhood. Remnants of modalistic meaning fell away following inclusion of *prosopon* in incarnation and trinity doctrinal formulation.

- 5.7.24                    **Poiotetes** (ποιο<thtej) identifies distinct attributes, qualities or characteristics of an entity, whether animate or inanimate.
- 5.7.25                    **Physis** (φusi<j) means nature; the sum total of characteristics which comprise a particular kind of entity. It is the constitution of a thing. In the natural order, there results developed fulfillment in maturity of a particular kind of reality. *Nature* is specific to a particular kind of entity, such as human nature, whether of the child or the man.
- 5.7.26                    **Summary:** Our modern insistence upon the continuity of the world process should not blind us to the truth that there are real differences in kind. This is the truth that classical terminology sought to define and express through terms which had to be adapted to Incarnation and Trinity theology.
- 5.7.27                    Classical definition of the nature of any entity is something like this: Whatever is real has reality of a certain kind and the word for that reality is *ousia*. Thus, God is divine *ousia*, men are instances of human *ousia*, and animals of animal *ousia*. Each kind of *ousia* is distinguished by its particular characteristics (*poiotes*) and the sum of these is its nature (*physis*). Each particular instance of *ousia* has an individual reality of its own. In early Christian doctrine this reality was called a *prosopon*.
- 5.7.28                    Through the work of the fourth century Cappadocian Fathers *hypostasis* was gradually substituted for *prosopon* because the latter could be used of each successive phase of a thing and, hence, modalistically. When used of the Persons of the Trinity it insufficiently safeguarded their eternal distinctness. *Hypostasis* had previously been used as synonymous with *ousia*. These changes of usage were a cause of confusion.
- 5.7.29                    The usual Latin equivalents are: *substantia* for *ousia*, *persona* for *hypostasis*, *qualitates* for *poiotes*, and *natura* for *physis*.
- 5.7.30                    Final doctrinal formulations were:  
Regarding Christ: duo fu,sei evn mi,a u`posta,sei; *duo naturae in una persona*.  
(two natures in one person)  
Regarding the Trinity: trei/j u`po,staseij ven mi,a Vousi,a; *tres personae in una substantia*.  
(three persons in one substance)
- 5.7.31                    It should not be thought that in reference to creatures this language suggests a static conception of substance and that it ignores the continuity of the developing process. The categories are neither lifeless nor purely materialistic. Modern associations of the word 'substance' should not be read back into the patristic use of *ousia* and *substantia*.
- 5.7.32                    The classical definition of *persona* is *naturae rationalibus individua substantia* (Boethius). Both *persona* and *prosopon* are capable of ambiguity. *Individua substantia* is the Latinization of *hypostasis*. According to the Church Fathers, two important elements must be preserved in Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity: (a) individuality, not modalism, of *hypostasis*, and (b) rational nature carried by *persona*. By *ousia*, substance, the ancients meant reality not materiality. The *ousia* of the Father and of the Son is that both are God as to essential nature (note 5.7.21).
- 5.7.33                    Over the years I have formed the conviction not only from the arguments but also from the atmosphere of the Nicene-Chalcedon tradition that the Church Fathers had no intention of creating a language to explain either the Incarnation or the Trinity. The reverse is the case. They eschewed explanation, but this does not mean that they retreated into irrational mystery, any more than modern physics theories retreat into troubling

mystery. By their adaptation of ancient terminology to the uses of Christian Theology, the Church Fathers aimed to set the corner posts of the area of Incarnation discussion. It is a comfort to find, more recently, an Orthodox scholar who confirms this point. The decisions by which the Church arrived at the doctrine of the Trinity, he says, were the negation of explanation (Archbishop Methodios, "The Homoousion", *The Incarnation*, T. F. Torrance, ed., 1981, p.4). He goes on to suggest that, while criticizing traditional Incarnation theology, today's mythographers themselves fail to confess what their beliefs concerning the Person of Christ are. Nevertheless,

5.7.34 *We on the Orthodox side, insist that our beliefs about the Person of Jesus are those of the Fathers of the Church who have expressed in various ways that divine revelation and the homoousion were the starting point and the guiding concept in their interpretation of the mystery of the incarnation and the mystery of the Trinity.*

5.7.35 **The Creed of Nicea, 325 CE**

5.7.36 The best known and most important of the ancient Creeds is the one prepared and ratified by the Council of Nicea in 325 CE, convened and attended by the Emperor Constantine in an effort to deal with the Arian controversy. Thus the Creed of Nicea ought not to be regarded as a complete statement of Christian beliefs. It is framed to give special attention to Incarnation questions raised by Arius and his followers.

5.7.37 Details of the proceedings at Nicea have not survived. We know that considerable discussion ensued as to how to deal with Arian teaching. It should be borne in mind that Arius was not the only one on trial or under suspicion. Anticipation of such a Synod and actual participation in one inevitably encourages a suspicion-generating atmosphere, especially with the Emperor and his entourage looking on. Many who had taken one of several sides of the Incarnation debate felt constrained to state and defend their positions and, often, themselves. Finally, Eusebius of Caesarea, one of the most notable of the scholars present, put forward what is said to be the Baptismal Confession of the Church at Caesarea. Whether it was that or a conflation of a number of similar confessions from other churches as well, and to what extent it was intended to exculpate Eusebius himself (he had been charged with heresy by the Church at Antioch) is uncertain. Though well received the statement was deemed to allow loopholes to the Arians. In any event, with amendments Eusebius' Creed became the basis for the formulation of the Creed of Nicea. The text of the first, main part of Eusebius Creed follows (from Socrates, *Church History* 1.8). The Greek text is available in Bindley, p. 53. I have numbered the lines to facilitate comment on the amendments.

5.7.38

**The Creed of Eusebius of Caesarea:**

Line 1: We believe in One God, Father, Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible;

Line 2: And in one Lord Jesus Christ the Word of God

Line 3: God of God, Light of Light, Life of Life, Son only begotten, First-born of all creation,

Line 4: begotten of the Father before all ages

Line 5: through whom also all things came into being;

Line 6: who for our salvation was incarnate and dwelt (like any citizen) among men,

Line 7: and suffered, and rose again on the third day, and ascended to the Father, and shall come again in glory to judge the living and dead.

Line 8: We believe also in one Holy Spirit.

5.7.39

**Notes on the Creed of Eusebius**

Line 2: The term *Word* (λογος) was removed because it was deemed to be too vague in light of Arian teaching. *The Son of God* is inserted prominently instead.

Line 3: *Firstborn of all creation* was removed because it was susceptible to Arian interpretation that begetting logically implies a beginning of existence.

Line 4: Deleted because it was susceptible to Arian teaching that *there was when the Son was not*.

Line 6: *And became man* (Ἐνανθρωπήσας), which means en-man-ed or became a man) is substituted for *lived among men* as a stronger statement of true humanity.

5.7.40

Key additions in the Creed of Nicea which are not in the Creed of Eusebius:

*That is of the substance of the Father* (τὴ οὐσίᾳ τῆς πατρὸς)

*Begotten not made* (γεννητὸς οὐκ ἐποίηστος)

*Of one substance with the Father* (ὁμοουσίᾳ τῷ πατρὶ)

5.7.41

**The Creed of Nicea**

The Greek text is available in Bindley, p. 26. I have numbered the lines to facilitate comment on terminology. The anathemas against heretical opinion, chiefly Arian, with which the Creed concludes have been noted earlier in the section dealing with theological aberrations and controversy occasioned by them during the period of the Early and Later Church Fathers (5.5.17). What follows is the main, positive part of the Creed.

Line 1: We believe in one God Father Almighty Maker of all things visible and invisible;

Line 2: And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God

Line 3: Begotten of the Father as only-begotten, that is of the substance of the Father

Line 4: God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God,  
 Line 5: begotten not made, of one substance with the Father  
 Line 6: through whom all things came into existence, both things in heaven and things on the earth;  
 Line 7: who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and became man,  
 Line 8: suffered, and rose on the third day, ascended into the heavens, is coming to judge living and dead.  
 Line 9: And in the Holy Spirit.

5.7.42

### Notes on the Creed of Nicea

Line 1: *All-sovereign* translates *pantokra, tora*, note *Revelation* 1:8.  
 Line 2: *Son of God* translates *to.n u`io,n tou/ qeou/*.  
 Line 3: *gennhqe,nta evk tou/ patro.j monogenh/, toute,stin evk th/j ovusi,aj tou/ patro,j, Qeo.n en qeou/*  
 Hort: begotten from the Father as only begotten God from God, that is from the very being of the Father.  
 Bethune-Baker:  
 begotten from the Father as only (Son), that is from the being of the Father, God from God.  
 The use of substance (*ovusi,aj*) here declares the essential, eternal unity of the Son with the Father.  
 Line 4: Analogy is dropped here. Father and Son, unconfused, equally are really God.  
 Line 5: *o`moo,usion tw/ patri,,* sharing one being with the Father, personally distinct  
 but essentially one. The *ovusi, a* of the Son is the *ovusi, a* of the Father, but the existence of the Son is distinct in relation to the Father. *Of the substance of the Father* safeguards the essential being of the Son; *Of one substance with the Father* safeguards both his essential being and his relational distinctness.  
 Line 7: The Son, whose being is the same as the Father's became *man*. The term *evnanqrwph, santa* strengthens the sense of the commonly used phrase *made flesh* in the sense that the eternal Word took upon himself all that makes a man a man. In becoming man he took on whatever was necessary to human nature, all the constituents of a normal human existence.

5.7.43

### From Nicea to Chalcedon

5.7.44

It is beyond the scope of this study to present in detail the events and documents of the period between the Council of Nicea in 325 and the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Some of this is dealt with in the previous section on the Classical Controversies

concerning the person of Christ. All of the events led to Chalcedon as the critical and, ultimately, final doctrinal formulation of the Church about the Person of Christ for the generations to come.

5.7.45 Events during the lifetime of Athanasius and afterwards are excruciatingly difficult to follow. Some important matters are: **The Creed of Constantinople**, 381, which reaffirmed Nicea but with changes. These included omission of *from the substance of the Father* in order to mute the 'substance' terminology controversy, and a number of additions: reference to the Virgin Mary, Pontius Pilate, the burial of Christ, Scripture authority, the coming Kingdom, the Church as universal (catholic) and apostolic, baptism and remission of sins, resurrection and the life to come. This creed has taken the name of Nicea and has supplanted the Creed of Nicea in Christendom. It is commonly known as the **Nicene Creed**. The English language form which is familiar in Protestant Churches is found in the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer*. There it begins as a personal confession, *I believe...* The text of the Creed follows:

5.7.46 *We believe in one God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible;*

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came into existence; who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into the heavens, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge living and dead, of whose kingdom there shall be no end;*

*And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who with Father and Son is worshipped together and glorified together, who spoke through the prophets;*

*In one holy catholic and apostolic Church,*

*We acknowledge one baptism for forgiveness of sins.*

*We wait for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come.*

5.7.47 Dissension leading to Chalcedon in 451 concerned chiefly the views of Arius, Apollinaris, Nestorius and Eutyches, which were addressed at the Council of Ephesus in 431 but the final form of Church response to them came at Chalcedon. The fundamental issue was how to conceive of two natures, divine and human, in one person. Positive formulation came through Cyril of Alexandria and Leo of Rome. The *Tome* of Leo, written in 449 as a response chiefly to Eutyches, expresses beliefs about the two natures of Christ which were embedded in the Creed of Chalcedon. He says (translation by William Bright in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, E. R. Hardy, ed., 1954, p. 363) that to conserve the proper character of each nature,

5.7.48 *Accordingly, while the distinctness of both natures and substances is preserved, and both meet in one Person, lowliness is assumed by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity; and in order to pay the debt of our condition, the inviolable nature has been united to the passible, so that, as the appropriate remedy for our ills, one and the same 'Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus', might from one element be capable of dying, and from the other be incapable. Therefore in the entire and perfect nature of very Man was born very God, whole in what was his, whole in what was ours.*

- 5.7.49 The issues addressed in the Creed of Chalcedon and the forms of words employed are:
- 5.7.50 Against Arianism the Creed says that Christ is truly God, of one substance with the Father.
- 5.7.51 Against Apollinarianism the Creed says that Christ is complete man having a reasonable soul; he is of one substance with us.
- 5.7.52 Against Nestorianism the Creed says that Christ has two natures without division or separation.
- 5.7.53 Against Eutychianism the Creed says that the two natures are without change and are unconfusedly distinct.
- 5.7.54 Against all four of the above the Creed says that the two natures comprise one person (*prosopon*) and subsistence (*hypostasis*), who is truly God and truly man.
- 5.7.55 In its own words in the preamble the Creed condemns a Dyad of Sons, passible divinity in the Son, a mixture or fusion of the two natures, a non-human origin of Christ's body, or teaching that there were two natures before but only one after the union of God and man in Christ. The critical part of the formulary follows (in E. R. Hardy, p. 373):

5.7.56 **The Creed of Chalcedon**

*Following therefore the holy Fathers, we confess one and the same our Lord Jesus Christ, and we all teach harmoniously (that he is) the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father in Godhead, and the same consubstantial with us in manhood, like us in all things except sin; begotten before ages of the Father in Godhead, the same in the last days for us; and for our salvation (born) of Mary the virgin theotokos in manhood, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, unique; acknowledged in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation - the difference of the natures being by no means taken away because of the union, but rather the distinctive character of each nature being preserved, and each combining in one person and hypostasis - not divided or separated into two Persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets of old and the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us about him, and the symbol of the Fathers has handed down to us.*

- 5.7.57 The work of the Council of Chalcedon actually began in 449 at Ephesus, but severe disturbance leading to violence frustrated attempts at formulation, chiefly because Leo's *Tome* affirmed two natures in one person. Many in the east, while not necessarily favoring Eutyches, believed that the West was falling into Nestorianism. Only in the fifth session of the Council, convened at Chalcedon, was Leo's *Tome* accepted along with Cyril's *Second Letter to Nestorius*. To this day Greek Orthodox theologians deny that the Eastern bishops accepted and approved Leo's *Tome*. They prefer Cyril's phrasing, to which I refer below.

5.8.0 **The Person of Jesus Christ**

- 5.8.1 What should be, indeed must be, the faith of the Church regarding Jesus Christ?
- 5.8.2 First, the mythographers have dismissed the Creeds of the Church on grounds that as to both miracle and metaphysics the concept of unique, historical Incarnation of an Eternal Word is unacceptable to the modern secular mind. We can only deal with

Jesus Christ in terms of myths that have grown up around him. Have the mythographers won the battle? Are we now to move away from the worship of Christ to fostering some of his alleged values; only, it should be added, those values which appeal to us, but not those which do not, such as his pronouncements of judgment to come?

5.8.3 Second, current contextualization studies and theories have so broken up the historical record that no coherent story about Jesus can be constructed, it is said. I leave it to the archaeologists and New Testament specialists to continue that debate. I add only that research tends to reinforce the authenticity of the biblical record. What shape and credibility to assign to biblical Christology or Christologies is another matter. It is the conceptual side which concerns me chiefly, especially responses from those committed to a traditional Christology.

5.8.4 In light of the recent historical data, Biblical Theology studies have for the present carried us about as far as we can go on that path, including those who write from a confessional, traditional standpoint, whether Protestant, Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox. A representative review shows that three aspects of New Testament teaching about Jesus are the focus of recent studies. It should be borne in mind that the relation of Paul's Christology to the historical Jesus troubles some, questions which N. T. Wright is recently addressing. The three aspects are:

5.8.5 First, that the names and titles of Jesus convey what he said about himself and the conviction of the Church about his identity.

5.8.6 Second, that a fair reading of the significance of his life and ministry parallels the significance of his names and titles.

5.8.7 Third, that the several Incarnation presentations in the New Testament including the meaning of his titles and life, and the concept of his pre-existence and Godhood, comprise a coherent whole which is rooted authentically in the teaching of Jesus or direct implications from his teaching.

5.8.8 Rarely do these studies touch on the metaphysical questions entailed in the expositions of the titles attributed to Jesus. Thus they have not adequately blunted the mythographers' criticisms. Such Biblical studies have, to my mind, convincingly demonstrated the validity of the Christian claim to the Incarnation based upon the New Testament documents, but they do not adequately probe the rationale for fixed conclusions from historical data nor, even less, the metaphysics of the incarnate life.

#### 5.8.9 **Recent Studies in Biblical Christology**

In the following notes I draw upon the studies of I. H. Marshall, C. F. D. Moule and M. J. Harris as examples of recent studies about Jesus in Biblical Theology.

##### 5.8.10 **1. I. Howard Marshall**

5.8.11 As criticisms of traditional Christology gathered force from both the contextualization studies and the mythographers, I. Howard Marshall in his *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (1976) sought to identify the Christological emphases of the New Testament. He reviews Bousset's nineteenth century rationalist view that the concepts Son of Man and Lord as applied to Christ signify mistaken teaching about an imminent parousia and a cultic deity mystically present among his followers. He traces rejoinders to this in the rehabilitation of the concept of divine sonship, especially the work of Oscar Cullmann who advanced ten titles in four groups as core New Testament teachings about sonship. It should be noted that these relate to functions not being (because pre-existence is dismissed as imitation of pagan myth): first, Earthly Work

(Prophet, Suffering Servant, High Priest); second, Future Work (Messiah, Son of Man); third, Present Work (Lord, Savior); fourth, Pre-existence (Word, Son of God, God).

5.8.12 Marshall notes that F. Hahn concentrates title-study on Son of Man, Lord, Christ, Son of David and Son of God; with appendices on Suffering Servant, High Priest and Prophet. Hahn deals with the titles within the historical, social and political context of Palestine, suggesting the beginnings of pagan Greek-speaking influences within an increasingly Hellenized Church as the source of the pre-existence concepts.

5.8.13 Marshall also notes the work of R. H. Fuller who extends the discussion by relating the titles to a three-fold influence on early Christianity: Palestinian Judaism, Hellenistic Judaism and Hellenistic Gentile. This leads ultimately, Fuller said, to a three-stage Christology (following earlier stages emphasizing Earthly Life, Parousia and Heavenly Reign) of Pre-existence, Incarnate Life and Heavenly Reign. This thesis does not engage Paul's Christology and offers a sociological explanation of injection of Hellenistic metaphysical terminology. The foregoing theses assume that a primitive early faith of Jesus existed which preceded Paul's Christology and preceded the inevitable Hellenization of early Galilean faith. Ultimately, Pre-existence and Creedal Christology are constructions of the Church, rather than teachings of Jesus or concepts which can legitimately be inferred from his teaching.

5.8.14 Marshall argues that specific historical events, notably the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, *at the time* are occasions for the titles, especially Lord, which were applied to Jesus. From its Jewish eschatological sense the title *Son of Man* was quickly applied to Christ as the Suffering Savior and coming Judge. *Son of God* at first related to Jesus as the eschatological figure and later to his pre-existence along with *The Son* to declare that God is the Father of whom he is the Son. For Marshall, Jesus' filial consciousness expressed by the term *Abba* (Father) points to the unique relationship between Jesus and God the Father. Critical to this is the non-title use of 'Son' in Matthew 11:27. Here, if it is accepted that the language is Palestinian and not Hellenistic, it is descriptive of his relation to the Father and hence raises the metaphysical question as to the essential nature of the Son in that relationship. This coheres with Paul's linking of Sonship with the resurrection (Romans 1:4). Here the resurrection does not create, it declares, his status. Marshall concludes that the titles ascribed to Jesus are rooted in the Old Testament and Judaism, that Jesus made claims for himself which are consistent with the titles ascribed to him, that the resurrection confirmed his divine status, and that the divinity of Christ not the humanity is the greater emphasis in the Gospel accounts. The humanity signifies that the Incarnation is real. It is the Word made flesh. Marshall does not engage the metaphysical questions raised by the joining of the two natures in one person.

5.8.15 **2. C. F. D. Moule**

5.8.16 In a parallel fashion, C. F. D. Moule (*The Origins of Christology*, 1977) discusses four well-known descriptions of Jesus: The Son of Man, The Son of God, Christ, and Lord (*Kurios*). He argues that use of the definite article 'the' critically reinforces the uniqueness of both Son of Man and Son of God.

5.8.17 First, Son of Man, he says, is more than a title drawn from the Palestinian apocalyptic environment and attributed by early Christians to Jesus. It is an important symbol which Jesus used of himself and his vocation, and the vocation of his followers.

5.8.18 Second, Son of God is identical in the mind of Jesus, he argues (p. 27), with Son of Man, linked through Christ's vulnerability and suffering as implied, he believes, in *Mark* 14:36 by the use of the intimate term *Abba* (Father).

- 5.8.19 Third, Moule argues that Jesus shied away from popular notions of political Messiahship. He re-interpreted Messiahship as Suffering Servant. This created deep uncertainty in the minds of his followers regarding authentic fulfillment by him of Messiahship (after the Crucifixion, but before the Resurrection, they were in despair).
- 5.8.20 Fourth, the title Lord (*Kurios*) is, for Moule, the 'test case' for the genesis of Christology. No wedge can be driven, he says, between an earlier deferential, social use by the disciples of 'Master' and a later Church theological use as Lord, meaning God revealed in the flesh: *the acclamation of Jesus as Lord is an insight appropriate to what was at least implicit all along* (p. 41). The concept that he is the cosmic Christ (*1 Corinthians* 8:6, *Philippians* 2:10-11, *Colossians* 1:15-17) is an extension of the faith that as God come among them, he is Lord of the universe. His unique, divine relation to God and divine creative initiative did not allow the first Christians to conceive of anything less than his divinity. They did not confuse their status as children of God with his as the Son of God. Moule concludes (p. 135),
- 5.8.21 *that there is a continuous identity between the Christ of the ministry and the Christ of the first believers after Easter; and that the characterizations of Christ in the New Testament are better accounted for as springing from contact with Jesus Himself than as springing from contact with extraneous sources.*
- 5.8.22 The Christological designations in the Gospels cohere with other, individualistic Christologies in the New Testament such as the Virginal conception, Pre-existence, and Christ designated as God. Paul's inclusive Christology, which parallels a theist's understanding of God, embraces the highest Christologies to be found in the New Testament.
- 5.8.23 What about pre-existence? Moule agrees that while this concept in John and Paul may be rooted in the experience of new life which then triggered understanding of Christ's pre-existent agency in creation, nevertheless *they experienced Jesus himself as in a dimension transcending the human and the temporal ... a divine dimension such that he must always and eternally have existed in it* (p. 138). Moule rejects the Christology 'from below' which, as we have seen in both classical and modern times, links the obedience of the earthly Jesus with the coincident presence of the eternal Logos. Pre-existence concerns not Jesus' physical body but his *personal identity*, says Moule. This is retained in relation to the post-resurrection spiritual body of which Paul speaks. He asks, *can 'eternal' personality existing after the incarnation be denied existence before it?* (p. 140). Messiahship is the triumph of Christ's divinely commissioned spiritual mission by means of the Cross and the Resurrection. This is as far as Moule goes in regard to the metaphysical questions raised by Pre-existence, Personhood, and Incarnation.
- 5.8.24 As helpful as the titles studies have been, most of such studies do not carry us beyond functional significance, though all of them can be read to imply truths about Christ's being. Those which carry ontological import have drawn the attention of philosophers of religion. For example, Christopher Stead has evaluated the appropriateness of using the term 'substance' in the formulations of the Doctrine of God and in Christology (*Divine Substance*, 1977), but the criss-cross between Biblical studies and the philosophical implications of the Biblical concepts calls for renewed effort to infiltrate fresh understanding of the Biblical data into the metaphysical questions. Moule retreats into mysticism in his conclusions.
- 5.8.25 In final comments on the ultimacy of Christ in relation to history and world religions, Moule asks whether Jesus as transcendent, eternal and comprehensive (i.e., more than individual) is valid for all time. Here he makes additional suggestions on modern formulation of a Christology. He discusses three:

5.8.26 First, we need to take into account modern insights into personality, but he does not say which theories nor to what point.

5.8.27 Second, that beyond the anthropomorphic presentation of the Logos in human flesh, the Logos may be present 'allomorphically' in some other part of the universe and thus may relate cosmically beyond earthly, individual incarnation.

5.8.28 Third, that Christology may point not to a post-human species, but to the human species brought into new ranges of human life and relationships. The titles attributed to Christ in the New Testament suggest that our categories are inadequate to cope with the evidence of his life. None of this clarifies the unity of the two natures in the one person to whom, nevertheless, Moule is committed as Lord and Christ. In the exchange of letters between himself and Haddon Willmer with which the book closes, Willmer criticizes Moule for proposing a Christology of *achieved transcendence* based upon *claims* which do not and cannot cope with subsequent historical changes if, indeed, Moule is claiming an historical basis for his Christology with on-going historical relevance. Willmer's contention is that the process of transcendence (analogous to the Process Theology concept of immanent divine creative presence) suggests Jesus to be both actor and recipient and that our sharing of this is by way of imitative participation. For Moule, the historical coming of Christ is uniquely once-for-all, with universal, on-going relevance, which will indeed trigger the offense of particularity.

5.8.29 **3. Murray J. Harris**

5.8.30 Harris (*Jesus As God*, 1992) documents seven major texts which he argues (p. 268) convincingly declare Jesus to be God; that is, the man Jesus is God among us. These are: *John* 1:1, 18; 20:28; *Romans* 9:5; *Titus* 2:13; *Psalms* 45:7-8 along with *Hebrews* 1:8; *2 Peter* 1:1. Whatever one may think of the New Testament witness, he argues, the faith of the first Christians was that Jesus is God come in the flesh. The term *theos* is a generic title: it identifies the class of things to which Jesus belongs, i.e., God. Passages such as the prologue of *John* (1:1, 14, 18) declare that the eternal Word who was with God is in fact God and that he became flesh and dwelt among us. Here his timeless existence, his intimate fellowship with God, and his predicated deity are stated. The claim is there. Can a rationale for the reality be constructed?

5.8.31 Harris makes a strong case for the view that Jesus is called God by the Apostolic writers and the early Christians and that this faith was reinforced by the conviction that Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled in him; hence, they frequently applied Old Testament designations of Yahweh to him. He concludes with a tabulation of the data (p.315-317). Regrettably, but understandably, the scope of his study does not carry him to the two-natures questions. He agrees that many of the titles attributed to Christ strongly support a functional Christology; nevertheless, they are not exclusively functional and other data support the view that ascription of Godhood to Christ is ontological in key titles, in explicit statements, and in general intent (p. 290). In a brief reference to Chalcedon he notes that while Oscar Cullmann had earlier interpreted New Testament Christology functionally, he later conceded that the New Testament presupposes the concepts which comprise the core of the Creed of Chalcedon (p. 289).

5.8.32 N. T. Wright (*Who Was Jesus?*, 1992), following C. S. Lewis, counsels against trying to re-discover Jesus by purely historical means. That is the objection made by Willmer against Moule's historical derivation: exposition of the titles attributed to Christ can report but cannot establish the legitimacy of the Christian claim. At the end, the Scriptural claim must be understood as revelation, a revelation about Christ's unique being, which ever since challenges our powers of comprehension as to how the eternal Word became flesh so that Jesus Christ is both divine and human and also one person.

5.8.33 **The Classical Affirmation**

We have examined what the Creed of Chalcedon rejects. What does it affirm? The language was framed to conserve Christ's true Godhood and to reject any attempt to diminish the full integrity of his manhood as an individual person born into this world. But the Creed does not attempt to explain the Incarnation. It is, as Bishop Methodios says, a negation of explanation. In 1912 William Temple, later Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote that *the Formula of Chalcedon is, in fact, a confession of the bankruptcy of Greek Patristic Theology*, but that it did preserve Christ's real humanity, ("The Divinity of Christ" in *Foundations*, by Seven Oxford Men, 1914, p. 230). He goes on to say that Eastern Theology has always been more concerned with the Incarnation than the West and that the Fathers at Chalcedon did the best they could with the substance language of Greek metaphysics which was at their disposal. Leo's *Tome* reflected the concern of the West which was not to probe the metaphysics of being but to affirm the truth of the two natures in one person formula and then move quickly to conserve the redemption truth of the death of God incarnate.

5.8.34 Consider a three-inch square drawn on a piece of paper. At each of the four corners one can place one of the four key affirmations of the Creed. They are: 1. The same perfect in Godhead. 2. The same perfect in Manhood. 3. Acknowledged in two natures (without confusion, change, division or separation). 4. Combining in one Person and *hypostasis*. These four: True God, True Man, Two Natures, One Person, comprise the area within which discussion and formulation may take place.

5.8.35 They are the necessary categories through which the historical data concerning Jesus Christ may be authentically interpreted in a non-reductive way. The Creed does not fix at a point how to account for two natures in one person; rather, it furnishes a pasture, well fenced, within which to graze and ruminate. It conserves the balance of the biblical picture of Christ. Can a metaphysical construct of it be formulated?

5.8.36 Such understanding of the intent of the Creed parallels Leonard Hodgson's question about the apostolic testimony as sheltered in the Creed, posed to me in a conversation: What must the truth have been, and be, when men such as they were spoke as they did? Attempts to formulate explanation are many. For the mythographers, the difficulties are insuperable metaphysically as well as scientifically, hence their consignment of Incarnation to the significance of ethical parable. Such attacks from outside traditionalist acceptance of the Incarnation should not lull one into dogmatic slumber. Within Chalcedon-accepting traditionalism the matter is nowhere near settled. When criticizing Kenotic theory about the two natures in which it is said that Christ gave up his divine prerogatives, Archbishop William Temple commented that if this was the case, what was the universe doing while the infant Jesus was in the womb of Mary if, in fact, he is the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe? (*Christus Veritas*, 1924, p. 142). Has modern theory improved upon theories rejected in the period of the early and later Church Fathers?

5.8.37 **One Nature Christology**

5.8.38 Monophysite theology was the most significant post-Chalcedon attempt to deal with the two natures question. A schism developed within the Eastern Orthodox churches which persists to the present. Roberta Chesnut has done a helpful study of three key figures in the heyday of Monophysite theology during the century following Chalcedon (*Three Monophysite Christologies*, 1976). They were Severus of Antioch, 465-538; Philoxenus of Mabbug, 440-523; and Jacob of Sarug, 451-521. Of the three, Severus is the intellectual heir of Cyril of Alexandria. Severus employs a Platonic metaphysic to make of the human characteristics iconic representations of the divine characteristics nevertheless existing in one identity. Such a unity is present when both soul and body serve spiritual ends, *without confusion, a single prosopon, a single hypostasis, a single nature*, p. 52. For Severus a single reality can extend through more than one level of

being, p. 111. Philoxenus adapts the Platonic *Theoria* (a beholding of the divine), to Christian mysticism. Jesus Christ is God incarnate by a miracle of his will (p. 57), but he exists in two modes, a natural and a non-natural. By using the analogy of conversion, baptism and new life, Philoxenus sees the new nature to be a miraculous addition to the old, not a displacement. This serves as an illustration of the manner of God becoming man in the Incarnation. While one may reject his one-nature conclusion, Philoxenus brilliantly focuses on a key philosophical issue which is the nature of unity (this can superficially be dismissed in attacking Monophysite theory as mixture), such as the unity of body and soul and the unity of Christ and the believer. Jacob's view appears to be that the Logos became flesh in the manner of divine incognito in a flawed humanity which, whether viewed as fallen or unfallen, is transitory in nature. The humanity serves the redemptive end, including the passion of the Cross. Jesus' nature is without division, but there is only one will in Jesus and that is the divine will.

5.8.39                   Recent agreement between five 'Oriental' churches, which traditionally have been identified as Monophysite (the Orthodox Churches of Egypt, Syria, Armenia, India, Ethiopia) and the majority of the 'Eastern' Churches has been reached, though emotionally the breach still exists. Scholars from the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Churches have together affirmed the Creed of Chalcedon. It is now seen that non-substantive terminological differences created misunderstanding (*Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite?*, P. Gregorios, W. H. Lazareth, N. A. Nissiotis, eds., 1981): *on the essence of the Christological dogma we found ourselves in full agreement.* At the center of the discussion was mutual acceptance of Cyril of Alexandria's phrase, *the one physis or hypostasis of God's Word Incarnate* (p. 3). In the series of conversations and statements issued, the one prepared at the Bristol dialogue of 1967 sums up confessional unanimity and terminological accommodation. The statement also rejects the monophysitism generated from Eutyches' views (pp.5-6):

5.8.40                   *Ever since the fifth century, we have used different formulae to confess our common faith in the One Lord Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect Man. Some of us affirm two natures, wills and energies hypostatically united in the One Lord Jesus Christ. Some of us affirm one united divine-human nature, will and energy in the same Christ. But both sides speak of a union without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. The four adverbs belong to our common tradition. Both affirm the dynamic permanence of the Godhead and the Manhood, with all their natural properties and faculties in the one Christ. Those who speak in terms of 'two' do not thereby divide or separate. Those who speak of 'one' do not thereby commingle or confuse. The 'without division, without separation' of those who say 'two,' and the 'without change, without confusion' of those who say 'one' need to be specially underlined, in order that we may understand each other.*

5.8.41                   Professor Johannes N. Karmiris of the Greek Orthodox Church tradition pinpoints the semantic confusion, the accommodation to unanimity but, as well, subtle, on-going difficulty. If the incisiveness of the monophysite view has been lost, there is nevertheless reluctance on their part to accept the Chalcedonian *en duo physeson* (in two natures) after the union but a holding to the *en duo physeon* (from two natures) before the union. Here Cyril's phrase is deemed to be felicitous: *Mia physis tou Theou Logou sesarkomene*, or the more Orthodox *sesarkomenou* (one incarnate nature of the God-Logos). Cyril is interpreting one nature to mean one hypostasis, i.e., one person, which rejects Nestorius' false claim that two natures equal two persons and Eutyches' false claim of two natures before but one nature after the Incarnation. There is one person of the God-Logos. The term 'one' person denies division of the Incarnate Logos. Thus,

*the term 'nature of the God-Logos' while appearing to be slightly Monophysite attests to the human nature which is not of itself an hypostasis, but has become enhypostatos, so to speak, in the hypostasis of the Logos* (p. 34). I take *enhypostatos* to mean to exist in an *hypostasis*, i.e., in the person of Christ.

- 5.8.42 Thus, in the unity of the person there is the bearing of both natures. One incarnate nature of the God-Logos equals one incarnate person of the God-Logos. How is such a union to be conceived?
- 5.8.43 When asked by representatives of the (historically) monophysite churches to say why there is difficulty in speaking about *mia physis* (one nature) after the union, Karmiris replied, we can speak of *one physis after the union, but with the meaning of one hypostasis*, with the four Chalcedonian qualifying adverbs: without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. The discussion concluded with the Eastern representatives recognizing that the Oriental representatives were not tending toward Nestorius, and the Oriental representatives recognizing that the Eastern representatives were not holding the heresy of Eutyches.
- 5.8.44 Ronald Leigh is a recent proponent of a one-nature Christology ("Jesus: The One-nature God-Man," *The Christian Scholar's Review* 11, 1981-1982, 124-127), which Thomas Morris analyses in *The Logic of God Incarnate*, 1986. Leigh argues that a one-nature view is necessitated logically by the definition of what a nature is. Insistence that an object may have two essential sets of properties fails to grasp that by definition the two essential sets are in fact subsets of the whole set of essential properties which define the object because only a whole set counts as the essential nature of an object. An object cannot have more than one nature. In Jesus the two sets of properties, divine and human, comprise a superset, namely, the one-natured God-man.
- 5.8.45 Morris replies (p.33-46) that this view of nature is flawed, both as to human nature and divine nature. I summarize Morris' argument: While an individual-nature (such as this or that particular man) must exhibit an individually necessary whole set of properties which are numerically identical with that individual, this is not so if nature is also understood as a kind-nature or essence-nature which is shareable but is not numerically identical with every individual of the class. Further, the Church Fathers deemed it impossible for any individual to have at one and the same time as parts of one and the same nature both a property and its logical complement. Thus it would appear that it is not possible for the divine attributes and the human attributes to form a single nature. Finally, the one-nature view creates an essentiality of nature such that the principle of the contingent nature of Christ's humanity is undercut. This is a point which haunted Eutyches' undeveloped insistence that there were two natures before but only one after the Incarnation.
- 5.8.46 **Kenotic Christology**
- 5.8.47 The term *kenosis* is found in Philippians 2:6-7 where Paul speaks of Christ's self-humbling to take the likeness of a human being and to endure the death of the Cross. Intended as a pastoral homily, Paul's comment has been ever since the battle-ground of differing opinions. The term is customarily translated *emptied himself* (RSV, NRSV and others). The Berkeley Translation adds the quaint footnote that Christ emptied himself *of divine powers that might overcrowd his humanity*. The NIV unaccountably translates it *made himself nothing*, which appears to extend the infelicitous rendering of the AV *made himself of no reputation*. While it is true that role and status are meant (Christ moved from the exalted status of *equality with God* to *form of a servant*) the metaphysical issue cannot be avoided. Beyond status, of what did he empty himself? Universally it is acknowledged that Paul here speaks of self-limitation of some kind. The emergence of nineteenth and twentieth century Kenotic Theology is one of the few novel contributions to Christological formulation since the Monophysites.
- 5.8.48 As a school of thought, Kenotic Christology arose in Germany in the early part of the nineteenth century, but became influential in the West chiefly through late nineteenth and early twentieth century British theologians. In Germany, G. Thomasius

(1802-1875) proposed a moderate self-limitation version of a genuinely incarnational theology in which he seeks to recover understanding of the humanity of Christ. The self-hood of Jesus Christ is the eternal Logos with assumed human characteristics so that a divine-human self is formed. Christ's life consists of two states which require separate discussion (as to their functions) but together they produce a unified purpose of redemption. Jesus gradually developed consciousness of his vocation through the Spirit. Successors to Thomasius radicalized the self-emptying to such an extent that real incarnation takes place only in name but not in reality.

5.8.49

British theologians made a much more positive and influential contribution. These include F. D. Maurice, 1805-1872; P. T. Forsyth, 1848-1921; Charles Gore, 1853-1932; and Oliver Quick, 1885-1944. Structured as biblical theology, infused by the spirit of the Creeds, these writers sought to rescue the humanity of Christ from the almost Docetic outlook which pervaded the era. Because of the rising tide of Liberalism in theology traditionalists had focused on the deity of Christ. Kenotic theology emphasized Christ's gracious condescension. Forsyth's formulation is a metaphysical proposal on the two natures issue - but more about him later. For Oliver Quick (*Doctrines of the Creed*, 1938) the suggestion that God but not deity became incarnate is unintelligible. Quick cites Gore, *He emptied himself of divine prerogatives so far as was involved in really becoming man, and growing, feeling, thinking and suffering as man* (p. 133).

5.8.50

American evangelical theology has been implicitly Kenotic in nature, seeking on the one hand to emphasize the self-humbling of Christ and his suffering on the Cross and on the other his deity. But American evangelical theologians have generally eschewed confronting the metaphysical issue beyond identifying the problem. For example, to say that he *became functionally subordinated to the Father for the period of the incarnation* unsuccessfully dodges the metaphysical question (Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1983-1985, p. 735).

5.8.51

The crux of the matter is not only whether the eternal Son of God incarnate can set aside the essential attributes of omniscience, which then directly impinges upon omnipresence and omnipotence, but whether that which is eternal can become contingent. Can the Eternal Word *begin* to exist? Kenoticism impinges directly upon the eternal equality of the three Persons of the Trinity. This is why an incarnationist theologian such as Archbishop William Temple pushed the form or essence of humanity back into the very being of God. The reply of kenoticists is that complete self-limitation does not apply. It applies only to the transcendental, creation-oriented attributes, which are inconsistent with human nature in any case, but not to the moral ones. Indeed, impassibility and changelessness are critically important to assure the consistency of divine love. Perfection and self-limitation cohere. Quick says (p. 135),

5.8.52

*But if we conceive God's changelessness to consist simply in the absolute steadfastness of his perfect will of love, we can at once deny that the self-limitation of the eternal Son in the historical manhood of Jesus involves any real variableness in the deity; since it is the consistency of God's love for man which is the very cause and ground of the self-limitation.*

5.8.53

Leonard Hodgson, late Regius Professor in the University of Oxford espoused strong Incarnation and Trinity views. In his Gifford Lectures (*For Faith and Freedom*, II, 1957, p. 86) he affirms the truth of the Chalcedonian definition that in Christ were united divine nature with divine consciousness and human nature with human consciousness. But as believers in God as Creator the Church Fathers were untroubled by questions of God's impassibility. I find this comment troubling because considerable attention was given to this critically important question during the controversies of the Nicea-Chalcedon period.

5.8.54

Hodgson furnishes a useful definition: *to be human is to be living as the conscious subject of experiences mediated through a particular body in space and time.* In Jesus Christ, he says, we see God experiencing life in this way. He concedes that the Gospels attribute human limitations to Jesus. How this can be compatible with God's omniscience and omnipotence Hodgson leaves as acknowledged paradox: the antinomy of God-in-himself and God-incarnate. Can the eternal enter the temporal incarnate? For Hodgson, greater understanding of this may come if we can grasp more fully the truth that in eternity God is personal. When we understand what personhood and its unity mean we may be able to comment better on what it takes for the eternal Son to become a fully human person.

5.8.55

Kenotic theory cannot, I think, overcome the difficulties of on the one hand defining the absolute attributes of God as infinite and eternal and on the other hand suggesting a mode of existence which metaphysically limits them. Nor do I think that selective impassibility or immutability such as that which Quick allows for in the case of the moral attributes in the Incarnation is convincing.

5.8.56                    **Redintegration Christology**

5.8.57                    It is a mistake to call P. T. Forsyth's Christology Kenotic in the sense of the mainstream representatives of that perspective in late nineteenth century British theology, such as Charles Gore and H. R. Mackintosh. The following discussion centers on his 1909 book *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* unless otherwise noted. Forsyth's aphoristic style daunts analysis but it is worthwhile to take the trouble to understand him. His influence on twentieth century evangelical theology has been considerable. He also influenced Emil Brunner at an early stage of Brunner's theological development.

5.8.58                    There are frequent Kenotic emphases. He holds that the mode of the Son's pre-existence with the Father and the psychological process of kenosis is beyond us (p. 273). The Son *chose* the oblivion of birth and the humiliation of life on earth. It was an act of self-renunciation (p. 277) but the renunciation was fundamentally pre-mundane (p. 318). The word given is final; the response is progressive. He limits himself for his creatures' freedom (p. 327). There were not in him two consciousnesses, but if he did not know something he was altogether ignorant of it (p., 319). Nevertheless, for Forsyth a merely Kenotic Christ is inadequate; that is, in the sense that the definition is primarily negative (p. 329). Along with renunciation must go exaltation. Forsyth is even prepared carefully to speak of a progressive incarnation which goes beyond Kenoticism because it is a more positive conception. Such a formulation will emphasize not what Christ gave up but what he came to become. In the following (p. 333) the words *raised to the whole scale* are, I think, Forsyth's way in this passage of saying what the Greek Fathers meant by divine and human *ousia*,

5.8.59                    *...it might be better to describe the union of God and man in Christ as the mutual involution of two personal movements raised to the whole scale of the human soul and the divine.*

5.8.60                    Forsyth begins not by rejecting the Chalcedonian formula of two natures in one person but by identifying what is to his mind a limitation: its categories are too elemental; too oriented toward the divine power which unites the two natures *into* one person rather than *through* a person (p. 223). Forsyth is grappling with the definition of an hypostasis (an individual) in the sense of its essential nature (*ousia*) which needs to be understood dynamically. He is pleading for a doctrine of coinherence which may be useful to better understand two natures in one person. He says, *interpenetration is something of which personality alone is capable*. Later he wrote that in marriage a new psychic entity is created by the joining of two lives. They live in each other. They are what they are in virtue of that coinherence (*Marriage: Its Ethic and Religion*, 1912, p. 34) which is what makes it more than mere cohabitation or contract. *They become one spiritual personality*. They interpenetrate. They make up a joint personality by the harmony of an indelible psychic difference ... (they comprise) *a dual, or complex personality*.

5.8.61                    Thus Christ's pre-existence is crucial not only in the sense that Christ is eternal; rather, that the relation with the Father which constitutes his personality is embodied in us. Jesus did this not by the acquisition of a divine personality but by the *redintegration of a divine person* through a moral process. It was the ethical resumption of such personality as he laid down (p. 288). By redintegrate Forsyth means that in the Incarnation humanity is renewed, it is re-established in a relationship with God and made perfectly whole again.

5.8.62                    That the Incarnation can be seen as progressive, as moral process, does not mean moral advance to Sonship (in the Arian sense); it is fulfillment in humanity of the pre-existent Son. For this to happen the attributes of God are retracted into a different mode of being; they are not, and cannot be, parted with. Self-reduction or self-retraction

of God are for Forsyth better terms than self-emptying (p. 308). His questioning of essentialist language is not intended to deny the substantial reality and integrity of the two natures but to affirm two interlocking modes of being (p. 307).

5.8.63 This formulation is the closest that I have found in modern thought to the anakephalaiosis (recapitulation of the race in Christ) doctrine of Irenaeus. Forsyth has focused upon the critical issue of personality as a complex unity. Regardless of whether one agrees with his developmental incarnation theory, the mode of coinhering natures in one personality is a crux of the problem once one has decided what comprises a nature.

#### 5.8.64 **Re-affirming the Creed of Chalcedon**

5.8.65 Can one re-affirm the Creed of Chalcedon today: that in Jesus Christ God the Son is incarnate and that in the unity of the Person of Christ the two natures coinhere without mixture or confusion?

5.8.66 In recent years to my mind Thomas Morris (see 5.8.44-45) has mounted the strongest defense of two-natures-in-one-person Christology. John Hick devotes a chapter to Morris (*Disputed Questions*, 1993, pp. 58-76). In the following I will highlight what I believe to be key arguments taking into account some of Hick's criticisms, concluding that Morris has made the stronger case.

5.8.67 Morris proposes an understanding of the Person of Christ in terms of an essentialist metaphysic of the concept of a nature built upon the foundation of a modalist logic.

5.8.68 A fundamental question is, what is a nature? Morris argues that we must distinguish that which is necessary to a nature as against properties which characterize a particular individual or even are known or deemed to be universal to a class of individuals but which are not necessary. Example: (most) men have hair but hair is not a necessary property of human nature. The definitions which follow are on p.38-39:

5.8.69 First, there is individual-essence, or individual-nature. This identifies a whole set of properties which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for being numerically identical with that individual, says Morris. It follows as a necessary truth that no such individual can have more than one nature. Thus John is a human being and has particular characteristics of nose, hair, height, weight. As an individual-essence or individual-nature he is unique.

5.8.70 Second, there is kind-essence, or kind-nature. This identifies a shareable set of properties which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for membership in that kind. The individuals are not numerically identical. Only on grounds of such a definition of nature, says Morris, can one give an account of two natures in one person that is intelligible.

5.8.71 I take these definitions to reflect exactly what the early and late Church Fathers meant, first, by *hypostasis* (Morris's individual-essence, or individual-nature) and, second, by *ousia* (kind-essence or kind-nature). The Chalcedonian formula was two *hypostases* in one *ousia*.

5.8.72 The importance of this distinction cannot be overstated not only for Morris's thesis, but also in the Patristic formulation. Morris argues that one must make simple but critical distinctions between common and kind-essential human properties and between being merely human and being fully human (p. 145). It remains then to ask what properties are kind-essential for human nature. The Creed says simply and comprehensively that the incarnate word became a fully human person. Therefore, to

address Jesus is to address God. To be fully human means that the Kind-nature of human beings is humanity. Jesus was fully human without being merely human (p. 66).

- 5.8.73 Hick objects to the distinction between individual-nature and kind-nature (Hick, p. 60), but he does not engage the metaphysical questions posed by modal logic on the distinctions between individuals and classes of objects. There is a substantial content to being human which overrides in importance merely common characteristics. The importance of this is evident from the attention given to it by ancient writers such as the Cappadocian Fathers and more recently by writers such as William Temple, P. T. Forsyth, G. L. Prestige, Leonard Hodgson, J. N. D. Kelley and R. P. C. Hanson.
- 5.8.74 Hick's second main objection concerns the form of Jesus' consciousness. If the first engaged the classical question as to the nature of substance, or of a substance, the latter engages the question as to the nature of personality. Morris argues that we tend to bring ready-made ideas as to what comprises personhood, whether human or divine (p. 64).
- 5.8.75 Morris proposes an asymmetric accessing relation between the two ranges of consciousness and intelligence in the incarnate Lord. It is at this point that the developmental view of William Temple and P. T. Forsyth may come into play. Morris says that the divine mind and will had an over-arching role (the omniscience was unimpaired) but the human mind and will did not have full and direct access to omniscience, hence to omnipresence and omnipotence. Hick suggests that the only way to coherence in such a model is by means of an oriental concept of unitive mysticism (Hick p. 71) accompanied by (human) moments of illumination. But I think Morris's points have validity because he pursues understanding in a different direction, namely, a coinherent unity of consciousness.
- 5.8.76 The critical issue is the conception of personhood which is espoused and in particular the content and mode of the unity which makes it up. A clue to a complex unity may be gleaned from the prayer of Jesus in *John 17* where he says *I in Thee and Thou in me, that they may be perfect in us*. This suggests a kind of unity to which Forsyth pointed when he said that in marriage a new psychic entity is created. One is reminded of the sad fact that upon the death of a loved one it is as if a part of one's own being has died. As well, there is an inhering reality of the one spouse in the life of the other spouse, or of a child in the life of the parent, such that there is a co-inhering, reciprocal relationship between one mind and the other, between one will and the other. That I do the things that I do out of love for my wife does not mean that my identity is reduced or that I am unfree. Her mind and will are in me and mine are in her. It seems to me that this is what Forsyth was struggling to say by his concept of the downward and upward movement between God and humanity in the Incarnation. William Temple, in language reminiscent of Augustine, strove to express a similar concept,
- 5.8.77 *Christ's Will, as a subjective function, is of course not the Father's Will; but the content of the Wills - the Purpose - is the same. Christ is not the Father; but Christ and the Father are One. What we see Christ doing and desiring, that we thereby know the Father does and desires. He is the Man whose will is united with God's. He is thus the first-fruits of the Creation - the first response from the Creation to the love of the Creator. But because He is this, He is the perfect expression of the Divine in terms of human life. There are not two Gods, but in Christ we see God. Christ is identically God; the whole content of His being - His thought, feeling, and purpose - is also that of God. This is the only 'substance' of a spiritual being, for it is all there is of him at all. Thus, in the language of logicians, formally (as pure subjects) God and Christ are distinct; materially (that is in the content of the two consciousnesses) God and Christ are One and the Same. The Human Affections of Christ are God's Affections; His Suffering is God's; His love is God's; His Glory is God's.*

5.8.78 If in the preceding quotation one substitutes the two natures of Christ in Temple's discussion of the unity of the Trinity an insight may be found as to the dynamic a-symmetrical relationship of the two natures in Christ which Morris proposes.

5.8.79 When we have a fuller understanding of the complex unity of personhood we may be in a better situation to grasp more of what the Incarnation implies. Then our struggles with vocabulary to express the reality of Apostolic faith might be eased. Now we struggle with whether to speak in terms of Irenaeus' recapitulation of the race in Christ, or two natures in one substance of Nicea-Chalcedon, or Forsyth's redintegration, or coinherence, compossibility, co-instantiation, or other terminological innovations yet to come. Meanwhile, on grounds of metaphysics and logic, rejection of the concept of the Incarnation by the mythographers is too over-reaching and, I think, presumptuous as H. D. Lewis has pointedly said.

5.8.80 **Who Do Men Say That The Son Of Man Is?**

5.8.81 *Who do men say that the Son of man is? ... But who do you say that I am?*

Who indeed!

5.8.82 Two generations ago as the writing of 'lives' of Jesus gathered momentum, a momentum which has since then increased in speed and breadth if not in depth, Charles E. Raven, who had wide interest in science and history as well as in theology, made a telling comment (*The Creator Spirit*, 1927, pp. 234-236). He expressed tongue-in-cheek admiration at the biographical inventiveness of the authors. Historical studies and psychological analogies, he said, had reduced Jesus' teaching to a casket of dry moral theology. They wrote biographies of Jesus which succeeded in producing only a projection of themselves. And when we read even those who write with appreciation, he said, we find that their categories cannot enclose him. *No other character so obviously transcends his interpreters*, Raven said. They cannot put together the tenderness and the sternness, the self-abnegation and the claim to divine Sonship, the Cross and the triumphalism. Jesus becomes a Pacifist, a Die-hard, a Dreamer, a Social Reformer, a Mystic, an Apocalypticist. To this we can add all the cultural, religious and political contextualizing studies and biographies of recent years, some of which beggar the imagination for their outlandishness. It is remarkable what stories can be spun without any historical data; which, to put the matter kindly, merely reflect the political and cultural correctness of an historically and culturally myopic generation. For example, that Jesus was a married and divorced father (what a comment on the obsessions of our socially distraught times!), or that he is the original theorist and practitioner of Liberation Theology (which would put him at the head of the line of today's broken-down Marxists!). Nevertheless, said Raven, despite the paradoxes of Jesus' life and despite the fact that systematizing him eludes our grasp, *beneath the surface contrast they fill me with a sense of congruity and completeness. If I cannot understand, at least I want to worship*. He adds that if such a confession is deemed to be mere obscurantism, so be it.

5.8.83 The instinct to worship Jesus as Lord and Christ does not create the myth of dogma; rather, the truth of who he was and is compels worshipful reflection. Christians today, as they have in all generations, worship him. Christians have learned this from those who attest to his identity, who themselves worshipped him, according to him the status, honor and devotion due only to God (*Matthew* 4:9-10). Their worship (*proskunein*) was no mere brain-washed gesture of culturally induced obeisance to a despotic potentate. It was glad acknowledgment that God had come among them in the flesh. When he saw Jesus the mad, homeless, cave-dwelling Gerasene ran to him and worshipped him (*Mark* 5:6). The madness of our times could do no better. Moderns mock that which is highest and holiest (*Mark* 15:19) but then fall down prostrate at the thought of the most incredible fantasy of all, namely, that, after all, Humanity is God. They worship what they have already become - valueless, cynical, erotic but passionless,

which leaves its own awful emptiness. But this is the stance of the intellectually and culturally blind; the dilettantes who feign knowledge. They cannot bear those who recover sight (*John* 9:38), who do not vaunt self-acquired vision (which would fit the ethos of this age) but who in gratitude for restored sight bow before Christ to confess *Lord, I believe*. Intellectual vanity resents gratitude as much as it resents the absolute claims of and for Jesus Christ.

5.8.84

I am convinced that the first four hundred years of the Christian faith record the struggle to find categories and terms adequate to the Lordship of Christ, not that the categories and terms they employed mythologized simple Galilean moralism. The quest is rooted in the worship of Christ and, though unended, finds its intellectual rest in the conviction that God has indeed come among us in the flesh. This faith produced the hymns and prayers to him, the praise of his name, the gathering about his table to celebrate his death and resurrection, the purifying hope of the life to come which is able to transform the life below, day to day, ideal to ideal, altruism to altruism. When I have tired of the dry, lifeless, and sometimes trite, attempts to contextualize Jesus I turn to the Church Fathers and saints of the ages. Here I find the ideals, the moral energy, the passion which triumphed over idolatry and brought the light of the new creation to humanity. An example is the ancient Greek hymn (at least eighteen hundred years old) entitled *The Eventide Hymn* which is found in Clement of Alexandria. Here is the devotion of Christians gathered at home in the evening at lamp-lighting time who, as the sun sets, chant praise to the Christ who is the light of their lives,

*Serene light of the Holy Glory  
of the Father Everlasting,  
Jesus Christ:  
Having come to the setting of the sun,  
and seeing the evening light,  
We praise the Father and the Son,  
And the holy Spirit of God.  
It behooveth to praise Thee,  
At all times with holy songs,  
Son of God, who hast given life;  
Therefore the world glorifieth Thee.*

5.8.85

This Christ is Man, said Temple, not merely generically a man, but inclusively. The definition of his substance lies in his personhood, in Spirit, in his will: *Lo, I come. in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God*. In him is the moral recovery of humanity. For us he became what he was.

5.8.86

The New Testament writers give his humanity full play. He is *a man approved of God* (*Acts* 2:22) through whom singularly comes the gift of grace (*Romans* 5:15). He is truly 'of God' and 'of man' (*I Timothy* 2:5); taking to himself our nature (*Hebrews* 2:14, 16-17, 18), our likeness (*Philippians* 2:7). Referential materials which give evidence of his earth-bound humanity are so assumed in the Gospel records as to be almost incidental to the narrative. His birth was authentically human, though unique. His Virgin-born uniqueness is not used in the Christological argument of the New Testament, but Matthew and Luke record it as appropriate to his status and mission. His childhood is there. His interaction with people in the normal course of daily encounter is there. Who is this one who speaks as no one ever has spoken before, they ask (*John* 7:4)? This one who rose bodily from the dead because death could not hold him? This is he who is Lord and Christ (*Acts* 2:23-24, 36). He discloses the glory of the Father and fulfills the glory of humanity in his Transfiguration.

5.8.87

Whatever unity of faith there was among the diverse group of Jesus' disciples, some of whom exhibited conflicting interests, the genuineness of his humanity was never in question but the truth of his divinity was the single cohering issue of their kerugma.

This was the common ground. This held them together. The truth of Christianity boils down to the truth of the Incarnation. Only this truth could hold together the disparate elements of the Jewish and Greek traditions among the early Christians. The cultured elite of our times have been absorbed with the historical Jesus but the tendency has been toward historical curiosity not to faith. He whom they study but do not worship is the inspiration of the culture which nurtured them in music and the arts, in morals and ideals. That Christian culture was not inspired by unbelief. In the end the question is, Is there a Savior? Restoration of broken humanity? How? Athanasius strikes to the heart of the matter: only God can save.

5.8.88

The Light which the lamp-lighting Evening Hymn of Clement's day glorifies has not been snuffed out. The unshakable conviction and continuity of faith within all the Christian traditions that Jesus Christ is indeed God the eternal Son come incarnate to save humankind remain. I wish that every reader of these lines could hear the remarkable rendition of the *Cantique de Jean Racine* written by Faure´ when he was only about age twenty, as sung by the Cambridge Singers led by John Rutter (Collegium COLCD 109). The words parallel those of the Evening Hymn. These deeply moving harmonies and words evoke a response like John's on Patmos who, in his vision of the glorified Christ, fell at his feet only to sense the Lord's hand on him and to hear Christ's reassuring word of grace, *Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades,*

*Word of God, one with the Most High,  
in whom alone we have our hope,  
Everlasting light of heaven and earth,  
We break the silence of the peaceful night,  
Saviour divine, cast thine eyes upon us!*

*Pour on us the fire of thy mighty grace,  
That all hell may flee at the sound of thy voice:  
Banish the slumber of a weary soul,  
That brings forgetfulness of thy laws!*

*O Christ, look with favour upon thy faithful people  
Now gathered here to praise Thee;  
Receive their hymns offered to thy endless glory.*

# THE TRINITY

Samuel J. Mikolaski

## OUTLINE

- 6.0.1            **Preamble**
  
- 6.1.1            **The Ancient Confession**
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- 6.2.1            **Revealed Doctrine**
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- 6.3.1            **The Eternal Procession (*ekporeusis*) of the Holy Spirit**
  
- 6.4.1            **Trinity in Unity**
  
- 6.5.1            **Trinitarian Faith**
  
- 6.6.1            **Trinitarian Life**

## Preamble

6.0.1            No one should suppose that the doctrine of the Trinity perches incongruously on the periphery of faith. Far from being nonsense, a fussy but obscure dogma, or an irrelevant logical stumbling block, this doctrine is indispensable to the Christian understanding of God, Christ, salvation, and the divine purpose in creation. All that is Christian hinges on the truth of the biblical revelation that God is one, eternal, personal, and triune.

6.0.2            The cruciality of the trinitarian conception of God may be grasped by considering the inner structure of many primary doctrines. To begin with, scholars of every age have seen that it makes little sense to speak of God as personal and moral unless he is more than unipersonal. What is personhood in isolation, whether of God or of man? Also, the doctrine of creation -- that is, creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) -- which declares God's non-dependence upon the world, points to the perfection of communal divine life prior to the creation (*John* 17:5). Even more crucial is the problem of how to fit in the Incarnation unless God is triune. Do not Christians confess the twin truths that God sent his Son into the world and that God is revealed incarnate in Jesus Christ? To contemplate the Incarnation in relation to the Cross is to see that the Son not the Father died on the Cross; that the Father raised the Son from the dead, thus vindicating both Father and Son (*Romans* 1:1-4); and that the ascension, present session, and promised return of Christ mean little apart from trinitarian faith.

- 6.0.3 To beg the questions by reducing full trinitarian belief to unipersonal monotheism touches more than the doctrine that God is triune; it compels rephrasing the entire vocabulary of faith because the essential Christian realities have been jettisoned. In the Bible, trinitarian faith is not an intellectual conundrum but a vital spiritual datum.

### **The Ancient Confession**

- 6.1.1 During the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era, formal doctrinal statements were developed to protect the Church from heretical opinion. (Note the carefully documented Bampton Lectures of H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth*, 1954.) This is not to say that the Bible was consciously eclipsed nor that doctrines such as the Trinity were post-apostolic innovations. The lines of biblical authority in the Fathers are clearly traceable in the extant literature from the beginning. To them the whole Bible was a Christian book, and by various interpretative procedures -- many of which were surprisingly modern -- they exhibited the truth of Scripture.

### **The Alleged Burden of Hellenization**

- 6.1.2 Far from suffering the burden of Hellenization (the view that original simple Christian faith became overlaid by the alien complexities of Greek philosophy, which produced the Creedal statements), the Church strove to express Christian realities in the language of the times. They could not, nor can we, opt out of contemporary dialogue. Drawing upon their life and worship, nurtured by Scripture, hedged about by the Rule of Faith, baptismal, and catechetical formulas, Christian scholars, often under attack both from within and from outside the Church, shaped the Creedal statements. Creedal formulation did not come as an alien force imposed from the outside; the creeds expressed the growing faith and understanding of Christians, sometimes apologetically oriented, sometimes polemically oriented, but usually grounded in the truth of Scripture. What Scripture says is what the Church believes, they said.

### **The *Quicumque Vult***

- 6.1.3 The most famous trinitarian formula derives from the Athanasian era of the fourth century. It is the first part of the confession commonly known as the Athanasian Creed, though it is not formally a creed, and it was written after the time of Athanasius: *We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.* To comment on certain important terms in this statement is to see that the early Fathers knew very well what questions their beliefs and language raised in relation to the Bible and philosophy. Often this is not recognized now.

### **The Term 'God'**

- 6.1.4 Christians employ the term "God" in more than one way. We believe in one God, we say. By this we mean God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, or at times, God in the sense of the Father only (*Romans 15:6*). But so astute a mind as the Cappadocian father Gregory of Nyssa said that the term "and" only joins the terms expressive of the persons of the Trinity, so that it is not a term which expresses the essence of God. We always use the term "God" in the singular with the name of each Person. By the term "God," therefore, Christians designate the essence or being of God, not the persons. The Godhead of the Father is not that which distinguishes him from the Son. Similarly, the Spirit is not God because he is the Spirit, nor is the Son God because he is the Son, but the Spirit and Son are God because their essential nature is what it is. We properly speak therefore of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

### **The Term 'substance'**

6.1.5 No one should suppose that because the formulators of the Nicene Creed used the term "substance," they meant materiality; rather, they meant reality. (See Part 2 of Austin Farrer's *Finite and Infinite*, Westminster, 1943.) We must not read back popular modern materialistic associations of the word "substance" into ancient times. The classical terminology was devised to express the distinctions between different kinds of reality, whether of God, of man, or of animal, and modern dynamic cosmologies must not obscure the truth of these distinctions. The Greek and Latin terms for substance, quality, and nature respectively are: *ousia*, *substantia*; *poiotetes*, *qualitas*; *physis*, *natura*. Each kind of being, they said, has its own qualities and nature. When we use the terms "substance" or "essence" we simply mean reality of a certain kind, whether of God, or of the created order.

### Personhood

6.1.6 The term "person" was devised to indicate that each particular instance of being has an individual reality of its own. In early trinitarian doctrine this individual reality was called a *prosopon*, but later the term hypostasis in Greek and *persona* in Latin became equivalents, so that the trinitarian formula read, "three persons in one substance" (*treis hypostaseis en mia ousia*, and *tres personae in una substantia*). These terms do not impose static concepts upon the doctrine. The Fathers, especially the Cappadocians, qualified their use significantly by the dynamic term *energeia*.

6.1.7 It is unrealistic to charge that all patristic writers fell short of our notions of personality because they lacked the modern term "person." Enough has been said to indicate that the works of the Fathers do stand up under modern critical analysis, and, as our argument proceeds, evidence will be adduced to show that the biblical writers thought of persons in fully modern ways.

6.1.8 God is not a person. There are persons in God. Distinguishing the three persons of the Trinity is an axiom of Christian truth. Key issues in formulating the doctrine are how to conserve the personal distinctness of the Father, the personal distinctness of the Son, and the personal distinctness of the Holy Spirit, while advancing a credible theory of unity which will guard the unity of the coinhering life of the Godhead.

6.1.9 The personhood of God in the Old Testament follows from prophetic attestation to the self-identification of God (the frequent use of the first personal pronoun, as in, *I the Lord your God ...*). God's self-identification follows from his self-disclosure and the experientially based divine attributes of which the biblical writers speak. This is radically different from the non-referential metaphors ascribing personal characteristics of concern to a non-personal divine force, or of a divinity deistically conceived (note the discussion on the Image of God and Personhood in Chapter 7.7.1-25, especially 7.7.9).

6.1.10 God is experienced as personal presence from the start of human encounter with him, as I have argued in Chapter 3, "The Knowledge of God." Christians attest to encounter with a personal reality. The approach to God is not merely to produce certain effects by sacrifice, gift or supplication, but to experience God as personally present to the soul which results in a transformed personal relationship with him, as attested by the writer of *Isaiah 6*. Christian worship entails mutual, i.e., interpersonal, exchange.

6.1.11 Thus, the incarnation signifies the personal character of God in the personal presence of the eternal Word in the life of the historical Jesus Christ. The function of Christian worship is not merely to address the deity, but to acknowledge that God's messengers (even angelic messengers) are extensions of God's personality. So the Son. So the Holy Spirit. Except that the latter are part of the eternal being of the Godhead, which angelic messengers, even though their actions and messages attest to God's personal nature, are not.

6.1.12 The New Testament is replete with references to the Son being God personally manifest in the flesh, as in John 1:1-18. As well, the Holy Spirit is described in equally personal terms: he bears witness, intercedes, helps, searches (*Romans* 7:18-26); *understands us* (*1 Corinthians* 2:11, 13); apportions (*1 Corinthians* 12:11); quickens to life (*2 Corinthians* 3:6).

6.1.13 Christian theism insists on personhood as the essential nature of God. The relationship with God to which the biblical writers attest is inconceivable outside of personhood and contacts that are mutually personal. Hence, what the Fathers meant by three *hypostases* in the ontological sense we express by saying three persons. A person is a subject, a non-reducible reality which the pronoun "I" readily identifies. Each of the divine persons is an equal *hypostasis* in the Godhead. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each to be thought of as "he" and are to be worshipped in our devotion.

### Numeration

6.1.14 The terms "one" and "unity" raise the question of number and the dangers of applying numeration to deity. The problems were fully apparent to earlier theologians. Opponents of trinitarian doctrine were quick to point to the tritheism implicit in the language, let us say, of "three in one." Orthodox Christians replied that number could be used of God only in a guarded, highly qualified way, because the indivisibility of the divine essence is axiomatic. Nyssa's brother Basil and their friend Gregory Nazianzus both urged caution in the use of number (Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 41-45; Gregory of Nazianzus, Fifth Oration: *On the Spirit*, 7, 13-20, 31, 32; Gregory of Nyssa, *On "Not Three Gods"*). Gregory of Nyssa said that number cannot strictly be applied to God because the personal distinctions cannot be enumerated by way of addition. Nevertheless, since we see no other way of preserving the distinctness of the persons, we must use number guardedly; but we must not transfer enumeration from the *hypostaseis* to the *ousia*, i.e., from the persons to the substance. The nature of God is altogether beyond our grasp. We can express it only as simple and indivisible.

6.1.15 What Christians can mean by "unity in trinity" will occupy our attention later. However, it is unambiguously clear to any student of the New Testament and of the Church Fathers that tritheism was never a threat to the Christian faith. Forms of modalism and subordinationism that attempted reduction of trinitarian faith were threats, but never tritheism. It is a point of some significance to observe that Christianity began as a sect of the Jews and that it was thoroughly monotheistic, yet the plethora of trinitarian language in the New Testament yielded not a trace of embarrassment from Jewish attack.

6.1.16 Our task must be, not to displace the full-fledged trinitarian language of the New Testament, nor to reduce it to other terms, but to try to understand it and to accept its truth. Only rarely has full trinitarian faith been achieved in the history of Christendom. Where it has, the vital redemptive, ecclesiastical, and eschatological realities which it communicates to Christians have generated a quality of life that reflects the holy fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Trinitarian religion yields a depth of theological insight which makes the truth grasped timeless, despite the language that clothes it. One may cite the quite remarkable statement of Evagrius, whose words bear striking resemblance to the exposition which follows:

6.1.17 *Against those who cast it in our teeth that we are Tritheists, let it be answered that we confess one God not in number but in nature. For everything which is called one in number is not one absolutely, nor yet simple in nature; but God is universally confessed to be simple and not complex* [Basil, *Epistles*, VIII, 2 (attributed to Evagrius Ponticus, note B. Altaner, *Patrology*, London, 1960, p. 307)]

### Revealed Doctrine

- 6.2.1 The truth that in the unity of God there is a trinity of persons can be affirmed only on the ground of revelation by God. Christians approach the doctrine of the thrice holy One (*Isaiah* 6:3) in a spirit of reverent awe.
- 6.2.2 For Christians, "the knowledge of God by revelation" means no less than "the historically revealed truth of God." This at once projects the Holy Scriptures to the center of the stage. To say anything about God is to say something about God; and to say something about God demands that what we say come under the judgment of Scripture. It is difficult, indeed impossible, to see what Christians can hope to say about God's nature and redemptive action unless the historical data of the Bible are taken seriously.
- 6.2.3 Two points seem inescapable in the Christian claim: First, the Christian narratives must be taken not just as illustrative stories or myths but as the actual forms that the universal principles have taken (note C. C. J. Webb, *The Historical Element in Religion*. London, 1935, pp. 31-51, 80-83, 89-91); and second, we must therefore grasp the truths that the language of the Bible conveys. If the biblical revelation does not tell us what is actually the case about God as one and triune then we are left forever in ignorance of his true nature. Revelation involves truth, and truth is a function of language. We require devout rational reflection upon the historical data of the divine self-disclosure, for this is the kind of evidence God has chosen to give us.

### **The Father is God**

- 6.2.4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (*Deuteronomy* 6:4).. This much quoted kerugmatic utterance, the famous Hebrew *Sh'ma*, epitomizes the deeply embedded monotheism of the Old Testament. When joined to the equally firm monotheism of the New Testament (*1 Corinthians* 8:6; *James* 2:19), such teaching is the foundation of the one biblical faith in the true God. There is but one God, the living God, who is Lord of creation, of life, and of destiny.
- 6.2.5 The truth that God is one can be documented voluminously from the Old Testament: ". . . the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him" (*Deuteronomy* 4:35, note v. 39; *Exodus* 20:1-3; *Isaiah* 45:5, 18, 22). Note well-known passages which extol the unity and character of God and mercilessly satirize idolatry (*Isaiah* 40:12-31; 44:6-20). By nature he is righteous and holy (*Deuteronomy* 4:24; 10:17, 18) and mighty to act on behalf of his people (*Deuteronomy* 4:37, 38), and he keeps his covenant promises (*Deuteronomy* 4:31; 7:8, 9). By these attributes God is declared to be one, not many; personal, not impersonal; ethical, not morally neutral. As the Holy One he is high, transcendent, separate from the world he made. Nevertheless he condescends to us, especially to the humble in heart (*Isaiah* 46:4; 57:15). His knowledge is infinite, his word is sure, his judgments are just, his works are perfect, and his mercy is everlasting (*Deuteronomy* 32:4; *Psalms* 33:9; 102:25-28; 139; *Lamentations* 3:22, 23). These truths demand from men utmost allegiance of mind, heart, and will (*Deuteronomy* 6:5).
- 6.2.6 The signification of God as one, personal, moral, and self-revealing is made in Scripture through the terms of God's name. This is theologically profound and philosophically astute. In this way men learned of him through the progressive unfolding of his person, character, and relations with them. God's names connote the truth about him in his mighty acts (*Genesis* 17:1; *Exodus* 3:14, 15; 6:3).
- 6.2.7 The grammar of the names of God and the language of the designations of God have led many to conclude - albeit in the light of New Testament truth - that the Old Testament does yield important clues to plurality in God or even outright indications of it. At the least, the data that prompt Christian scholars to see trinitarian overtones in the Old Testament prove very troubling points indeed to those, whether Christian or Jew, who maintain that God is impersonal or is unipersonal.

- 6.2.8 The extent of this evidence is not small but it can be only touched upon here. See, for example, G. A. F. Knight, *A Biblical Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity* 1956; D. L. Cooper, *The God of Israel*, 1945; Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1958; G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 1959; Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 1962; Peter Toon, *Our Triune God*, 1996; Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*, 1996.
- 6.2.9 The *Sh'ma* itself poses such a question. *Hear, O Israel: YHWH our Elohim is YHWH a unity* (*Deuteronomy* 6:4). Now Yahweh, or Jehovah, is singular, but Elohim is a plural noun. Despite various explanations of what this plural form means, no indisputable criterion for choosing one solution as against another has yet been found, including the offensive but grammatically correct translation, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our Gods is Jehovah a unity." If this plural form were an isolated instance, and if no other evidence remained, proponents of the unipersonal God theory could shrug it off; but this is not so.
- 6.2.10 Two instances may be cited in the creation narrative where the plural Elohim is joined to the singular verb *bara* (i.e., to create). Furthermore, the passages suggest communion in God, for angels do not seem to have been associated with God in the act of creation: *Let us make man in our image . . . and man is become as one of us* (*Genesis* 1:26; 3:22). There is also the Babel passage, *Let us go down* (*Genesis* 11:7). Parallels in the New Testament where plural subjects are combined with singular verbs are *I Thessalonians* 3:11 and *2 Thessalonians* 2:16.
- 6.2.11 The appearance of the angel to Hagar (*Genesis* 16:7-14) and to Abraham (*Genesis* 17:22; 18:1-2; note 19:1); the Captain of the Lord's Hosts who spoke to Joshua (*Joshua* 5:13-15; note 6:2); and the celestial visitor to Manoah and his wife, whose name was *full of wonder* (*Judges* 13:17-18), have prompted some to see these as pre-Incarnation theophanies. *The Spirit of Yahweh* references, especially since Spirit in the Old Testament is seen to be life-giving power with a moral emphasis, are thought to signify the Spirit as the agent of *Yahweh* in the Old Testament (note *Genesis* 1:2; *Isaiah* 40:13; 58:8-14). The personification of the divine wisdom in *Proverbs* 8 is tied by some to the *logos* doctrine of *John* 1 and the wisdom of God in *I Corinthians* 1:24. In Scripture Christ is identified with the Word of God (*logos*) and the Wisdom of God (*sofia*), but never with the Spirit of God (*pneuma theou*). The use of the threefold name of God in the benediction (*Numbers* 6:24-27), in relation to the presence and activity of God (*Psalms* 29), and in the threefold invocation (*Isaiah* 6:1-3) is significant also. Note the striking words of *Isaiah* 48:16 (compare *Zechariah* 2:10-13), which seem to apply to *Yahweh's* redeeming Servant (note Keil and Delitzsch and G. A. Smith, among others. While such evidence as the foregoing is not conclusive, it is suggestive.
- 6.2.12 Historically, the doctrine of the Trinity originated in the necessity laid on the first Christians to distinguish Jesus from God, yet to identify him with God. Through the incarnation of Christ and his teaching, Christians learned to distinguish the Father and the Son while maintaining the faith that both are God. That God is Father was no new doctrine (note *Psalms* 103:13; *Isaiah* 9:6; *Jeremiah* 31:9; *Malachi* 1:6); but that the Father is God and that the Son is God became clear through the Incarnation in the truth that God is *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* (*Romans* 15:6; *2 Corinthians* 1:3; *Ephesians* 1:3; *I Peter* 1:3; note *John* 20:17). Hence Christians test the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity by the truth of the doctrine of the Incarnation, and not *vice versa*. We do not assume a concept of unity by which to determine what the Incarnation can mean. Rather, because we confess unreserved faith in the Son as God incarnate revealed for our salvation, and attested by the gift of the Holy Spirit, we affirm that God is triune.
- 6.2.13 The Old Testament revelation of God leads to the deepest insight of all, which is the truth of the New Testament that God is the Father of the Son and our personal heavenly Father. God the Father is defined in Scripture with reference to the redemptive

work of the Son (*John* 14:9). Through (Christ we cry *Abba* or *Father* (*Romans* 8:15; *Galatians* 4:6). God is no abstraction, whether impersonal or suprapersonal, but the living, Holy Father.

6.2.14 This truth eclipses doctrines of impersonal causation, or of a God who shows no concern, or of a finite God imprisoned in the world, or of a God identified with the world as in pantheism. Fatherhood means not only that God is the Creator but also that he exercises loving care of the world (*Matthew* 11:25-27). It is he whom the Son reveals and at whose behest the Son came to be sacrificed for sin (*I John* 1: 1, 18; 3:16; 17:1; *Romans* 8:31-34; *Colossians* 1:20 *Philippians* 2:5-11). Through his incarnation the Son declared the Father. Through the death and resurrection of the Son, the Father declared the boundless love, grace, and power of his Fatherhood. Therefore we pray, *Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name* (note *Matthew* 6:8, 9; 7:21; 18:14; *John* 14:6; 20:17; *I John* 1: 3).

6.2.15 A word of warning on the doctrine of God and of the Father needs to be added. We must not suppose that the doctrine of the Trinity has been devised to solve the problem of creation, i.e., the problem of how to relate the infinite changeless God to the finite changing world, nor to solve the problem of revelation. The same applies to the Incarnation. Hence the Trinity is not merely an economic division of divine labor, nor do certain members of the Trinity simply bridge God's way to the world. The Trinity is the way God is essentially in himself. The Trinity is immanent and eternal. Two viewpoints of which there are both ancient and modern examples err precisely at this point: they use the Trinity as a device to relate God, failing to see that God reveals himself to be essentially triune and that all three persons are consubstantial in the Godhead.

6.2.16 First, the Christian doctrine is not derived from emanationist conception such as those of the ancient Gnostics and neo-Platonists, the former of whom related God to the world by sub-deities or aeons and the latter of whom made the world out of the "overflow" of the divine being. Both these theories aimed at a logical unity behind what they considered the superficial multiplicity of experience. The Gnostic theories postulated intermediate divine beings to shield the ingenerate divine principle from the physical world, which they supposed to be evil because finite. The neo-Platonic schools concluded with three levels of existence: God, the world soul, and the physical universe. Thus, if the world is the way God is externalized, then one might speculate that the Father is God-in-relation-to-himself, and the Son is God-in-relation-to-creation. But the doctrine of creation denies that the world is the necessary expression of the being of God in space and time. The *creatio ex nihilo* declares that the world is the product of the will and act of God, that it is not derived from the being of God. Recent idealist approaches such as the philosophy of E. S. Brightman reflect this same error. The views of Dr. Paul Tillich seem to reflect elements of the ancient neo-Platonic teaching in that God as Father is viewed as a relational name, as the ground of man's being, not as the revelation of a personal distinction in God (see his *Systematic Theology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951] I.287-89).

6.2.17 Second, neither is the Trinity to be explained by Modalistic Monarchianism, which is an attempt to solve the problem of revelation. Deriving from the beginning of the third century through Noetus of Smyrna, Praxeas, and especially Sabellius, modalism declared that God is one in number, that the Father and the Son are one identical person. The Godhead is one individual monad, but the Father, Son, and Spirit express three operations of God, or are three modes of the divine activity. As Creator and Lawgiver, God is Father. As Redeemer, God is Son. As Inspirer and Bestower of grace, God is Spirit. Modalism, which was born of a legitimate passion to preserve the oneness of God and the deity of Christ, has persisted to the present time as the most active alternative to full trinitarian theology. It is small wonder that Tertullian made the famous jibe at Praxeas, *He drove out the Paraclete and crucified the Father* (Tertullian, *Adversus Praxeas*, 1). Modalism cannot take adequate account of the personal distinctions which

pervade the biblical teaching. The *prosopa* are not masks or modes but *hypostaseis*. They identify real personal distinctions in God; otherwise the complex pattern of Christian doctrines to which we alluded earlier is destroyed.

6.2.18 Not a little contemporary theology is frankly modalistic, and much contemporary preaching and popular literature is implicitly modalistic by default, through fear of tritheism.

6.2.19 Dr. Leonard Hodgson, late Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, has been openly critical of the theology of Karl Barth as modalistic (L. Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*), 1955, p. 229; and "Trinitarian Theology: The Glory of the Eternal Trinity," *Christianity Today*, May 25, 1962, p. 3). The dialogue extends to C. Welch, whom Professor Hodgson also charges with Sabellianism (L. Hodgson, *For Faith and Freedom*, 1957, II.225-233; C. Welch, *The Trinity in Contemporary Thought*, 1953).

6.2.20 The key to the truth and the reply to both errors is the truth of the real incarnation of Jesus Christ. As an historical event, the Incarnation sufficiently answers the Gnostic denigration of history and matter. As the real coming of the Son of God sent by the Father into space and time, it demands acknowledgment of the New Testament distinction between the Father and the Son. The early Christians were unable to deny either the unity of God or the Godhead of the Son, and neither can we (*John* 17:3).

### **The Son is God**

6.2.21 Jesus Christ is the eternal second person of the holy Trinity who became incarnate at Bethlehem. Christian faith stands or falls with the truth that Jesus Christ is really God the Son and distinctly God the Son. The doctrine of the Trinity rests firmly upon this truth. He is called God unambiguously by the New Testament writers (*John* 1:1, 18; 20:28; *Colossians* 2:9; *Titus* 2:13; *Hebrews* 1: 8, 10).

6.2.22 First, the reality of Christ's divinity pervades all strata of New Testament teaching. It is impossible to understand the faith of the first Christians without the truth that they recognized Christ to be the Incarnate God. The titles of his deity especially harbor this deep-seated conviction of faith.

6.2.23 Christ is called the Son of God. Although this is used of his Sonship by incarnation (*Luke* 1:35; *John* 1:34; *Romans* 1:4; *Hebrews* 1:2), it is a mistake to limit the Sonship to the Incarnation, because the terms relate him to the Father as his *own* Son in a special way (*Matthew* 11:27; *John* 5:18; *Romans* 8:32). Especially in *John*, the terms *Father* and *Son* are correlatives, each being placed on the footing of eternity (*John* 1:1, 14, 18). Thus, God *sent* forth his Son (*John* 3:13; 17:5; *1 John* 4:10). The term *Son of God* is certainly a title of deity, as was made clear when the Sanhedrin condemned Christ on the grounds of claims not to Messiahship but to deity (*Matthew* 16:16; 26:63-65; *Luke* 22:70, 71; *John* 19:7; note *John* 8:58, 59; 10:31-38). The expression *only begotten Son* is to be understood in relation to Christ's pre-incarnate dignity and privilege (*Romans* 8:29; *Colossians* 1:15-19; *Hebrews* 1:6) and in the special sense of "begotten from everlasting" or "begotten from eternity," i.e., from the being, not the will, of the Father. Therefore he is essentially one with the Father. This begetting is an eternal fact of the divine nature; otherwise, if there was a time when the Son was not the Son, then there was a time when the Father was not the Father.

6.2.24 Christ is called the Word of God. In the Prologue of *John* (1:1-18) the term *logos* is not explained but is simply used to declare the deity of Christ. *In the beginning was the Word* means that before creation the *logos* existed. The contrast between *was* (became) and *I am* in *John* (note 8:58; *Psalms* 90:2) clearly establishes the distinction between Abraham finite "becoming" and Christ's eternal "being" (note *John* 6:20; 8:24,

28; 9:9; 18:6). Lacking the definite article, the construction of the phrase *the Word was God* marks "God" as the predicate, which means that the Word is identified with the being of God (note *Romans 9:5*), or the essential nature of God. No other English translation will suffice save *and the Word was God*.. Greek does not have the indefinite article, but the anarthrous construction, used without the article, does not mean what the indefinite article "a" means in English. It is monstrous to translate the phrase "the Word was a God." For a perceptive discussion of this, see Victor Perry, "Jehovah's Witnesses and the Deity of Christ," *The Evangelical Quarterly*, Jan.-Mar., 1963. These phrases declare the eternal substance of the Word, and the eternal oneness of the Word with God. The phrase *and the Word became flesh* (*John 1:14*) identifies Christ with the Word. Thereby the mystery of the Incarnation is proclaimed and we are led on to the climactic utterance, "God no one has seen at any time; the only begotten, who is God, who dwells in the Father's bosom, this is he who revealed God" (*John 1:18*). This reading is supported by two of the most ancient manuscript fragments, which prompt some commentators to render *only begotten* as a noun: hence, *the only begotten, God ...*

6.2.25 In numerous other ways our Lord is proclaimed to be true God. Old Testament titles are ascribed to him that, in the light of strict Jewish monotheism, are inexplicable unless Christ is being identified with the nature of *Yahweh* (note *Matthew 3:3* with *Isaiah 40:3*; *John 12:41* with *Isaiah 6:1*); *Acts 13:33* with *Psalms 2:7*; and *Ephesians 4:6-8* with *Psalms 68:18*). The works and attributes of God are ascribed to Christ (*John 1:3, 4*; *8:58*; *14:6*; *Colossians 1:17*; *Hebrews 7:26*; *13:8*). He is honored and worshipped as God (*John 5:23*; *20:28*; *Acts 2:36*; *7:59*; *Romans 10:9*; *Philippians 2:10, 11*; *Revelation 5:12-14*). His name is associated with the Father and the Spirit on equal terms in the baptismal formula (*Matthew 28:19*), in the benediction (*2 Corinthians 13:14*), and in the bestowal of eternal life (*John 5:23*; *14:1*; *17:3*). Finally, the whole biblical structure rests on the claim that redemption belongs to God alone (*1 Timothy 2:5*; *2 Corinthians 5:19*). If Christ were not God, then regardless of how great a being he might be there would really be no contact with God through him. This is the heart of Athanasius's great argument against Arius: only God can redeem and reconcile.

6.2.26 Second, the foregoing data establish equally well the personal distinctness of the Son from the Father. This is precisely the meaning of the middle clause of *John 1:1*, *and the Word was with God*. The thought is reiterated in verse 2. The sense is relational, and the divine nature of the subjects of the clauses conveys the sense that the relationship is eternal. Thus the emphatic *he* in v. 18 is consistent with the theological climax that this concluding verse registers: the Son from the bosom of the Father -- specifically he alone interprets or declares the Father. The distinct interpersonal relationships of which this and other passages speak are unavoidable (note *John 17:1-5, 18, 21*; *Acts 2:33*; *3:13, 26*; *9:20, 22*; *1 John 5:20*).

6.2.27 Unless the Son is viewed as distinctly personal, we fail to grasp the theology of the New Testament when it builds upon and freely assumes the reality of this distinction. The Son, not the Father, is made incarnate (*1 John 1:1-4*). The Son, not the Father, suffered the Cross (*Mark 14:36*; *15:34*; *Romans 5:8-11*). The Father raised the Son from the dead (*Acts 2:22-32*). In his glorified state the Son ascended to the right hand of the Father (*Acts 1:11*; *2:33*), where he acts as our great High Priest (*Hebrews 3:1*; *6:20*; *7:24, 25*). The Son will return in power and glory to gather the Kingdom unto the Father's hands (*Hebrews 9:24-28*; *1 Corinthians 15:24*). The interpenetration of these doctrines in the whole that constitutes biblical teaching cannot be brushed aside. When one part is touched, the whole is affected. Thus, if our doctrine falls short of full trinitarian faith (note *Romans 15:30*; *1 Peter 1:2*), we are left with the problem of reinterpreting, not only isolated concepts, but the entire body of theology.

6.2.28 Nevertheless, attempts to account for the language of the Son on other than a trinitarian basis have always comprised active, polemically minded alternatives. There are two of these: Subordinationism and Adoptionism. Both are attempts to account for

Jesus Christ in view of the impassibility of God. In my judgment both fail, but both have their modern exponents. Subordinationism and Adoptionism derive from attempts to preserve a concept of the unity of God that is supposed to be indispensable to faith. However, as noted earlier, we must start from the truth of the Incarnation rather than from a presupposition concerning the meaning of "one."

6.2.29 Subordinationism is represented chiefly in the ancient doctrine of Arius of Alexandria and in the heretical opinions of the Jehovah's Witnesses today, though any doctrine which reduces Christ to less than God is subordinationist. Virtually nothing has been added to the terms of this debate since Athanasius opposed Arius at Nicea in A.D. 325. The subtlety of Arius's opinion is that he threw the derivation of the Son back to the pre-incarnate state. Beginning with the premise of the mathematically single unoriginate divine being, Arius agreed that Christ existed before Bethlehem, that he was the agent of creation, and that as the foremost of created beings he should be worshipped. But, Arius said, Christ had a beginning. There was (a time) when the Son was not. Therefore Christ cannot be called God in the sense in which we apply this designation to the Supreme Being. He is like God (*homoiousios*) but not one substance with the Father (*homoousios*). Out of this distinction there sprang the famous Nicene Symbol, the first great formal doctrinal confession in defense of Christ's Deity.

6.2.30 On the basis of a certain logic of terms, Arius's contention is consistent. If God is indivisible and not subject to change, then, on one reading of "begotten," whatever is begotten of God must derive from a creative act, not from the being of God. Hence it has a beginning of existence. Therefore, the Son is not co-eternal with the Father. Fastening upon the term "begotten," Arius said that because he is begotten he must have had a beginning; Athanasius countered that because Christ is begotten of the Father, he could not have had a beginning. To say that a father begets a child is one thing, but to say that the Father begat the Son is another. The one is temporal, the other eternal. The one is of the will, the other from the being of the Father; hence the Nicene Creed insisted that Christ is of the substance of the Father, thereby sacrificing neither the impassibility of God nor the Deity of the Son. To say that the Son is begotten from the Father from eternity is thereby not to divide the indivisible God but to accept the testimony of the apostles.

6.2.31 Adoptionism derives from a unitarian view of God as not only one being but also one person. Adoptionism is of two types: adoptionist monarchianism, the attempt to preserve the *monarchia* or primacy of the one divine Principle; and dynamic monarchianism, the view that Jesus became the Son of God as a Spirit-energized man after his baptism. This doctrine has elements common to the Cerinthian aberration of the first century but was articulated clearly at the end of the second century by Theodotus at Rome, and later by Paul of Samosata. To them Jesus was a particularly virtuous Galilean but not God incarnate. Rather, he was chosen by God for a special mission and endowed with the Spirit at his baptism, or "adopted" as the Son of God. He did not pre-exist, nor is he essentially of the nature of God. Usually a sharp distinction was drawn between Jesus and the Christ, as is commonly done in contemporary existentialist theology.

6.2.32 Adoptionism is advocated today under the guise of the teaching that Jesus was a man of such goodness that God exalted him to divine status. This view holds that Jesus is divine because he lived a perfect life, not that he lived a perfect life because he was true God and true man. Biblical Christianity makes the Incarnation dependent not upon the earthly choices of Jesus but upon the coming of the eternal Second Person of the Trinity into actual human existence.

### **The Holy Spirit is God**

6.2.33 It is universally acknowledged by Christians that the Holy Spirit is God. There is no reluctance to see the activity of the Spirit as the activity of God, but some are

reluctant to acknowledge the personal distinctness of the Spirit. To distinguish the Father and the Son but not the Spirit is to maintain in practice, if not in theory, a binitarian rather than a trinitarian conception of God.

- 6.2.34                    There is a consensus that early uses of Spirit in the Old Testament mean the active power, or invasive force, of God (note the view of H. Wheeler Robinson cited in Chapter 4 at 4.1.5-6). No one wishes to make of the Spirit only impersonal divine force; rather, the Spirit is the personal God acting, or the personal activity of God. We are left therefore with two levels of difficulty: namely, is the Spirit personal, and is the Spirit distinctly personal?
- 6.2.35                    It is widely recognized that an idea other than the apparent controlling idea of the Old Testament must control interpretation of the New Testament data. The moral character and lifesaving prerogatives of the Spirit demand definition couched in some form of personal language. The question is, do the new controlling ideas which emerge in the course of revelation history compel thinking of the Spirit in more personal or fully personal terms?
- 6.2.36                    Because the Greek noun for Spirit (*Pneuma*) is neuter need have little bearing on this, no more than, let us say, the fact that the German word for young lady (*das Madchen*) is neuter should cause us to think that a young lady is not of the female sex. I must dissent from the view of Professor Eduard Schweizer (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, VI, 433-4), who says that the question of how far the Spirit is personal may be a false one because the word "personal" does not exist in either Greek or Hebrew. Neither do such words as "monotheism," "existential," and "confrontation," occur, but this does not prevent our asking whether what these terms denote is in Scripture. Are we to suppose that Abraham and Moses were not persons, and did not think of themselves as persons? The question is, What evidence compels us to conclude full personhood in any given case, or prevents us from doing so? Professor Schweizer himself is reluctant to understand Spirit as impersonal power but rather understands the Spirit as the way the personal Lord is present in his Church.
- 6.2.37                    The Christological revelation of the New Testament and the new life in the body of Christ are such a significant advance over Old Testament thought that new revelational ideas that control the meaning of Spirit in the New Testament are commonly assumed to exist. For example Professor Schweizer says that the Lukan materials pass beyond the Matthean and Markan emphasis on the "man of the spirit" Christology to the "Lord of the Spirit" conception. In other words, Luke (including *Acts*) and presumably subsequent writers (including Paul) go beyond the conception of divine power possessing a man. What are these new ideas, and how do they handle the data of the new covenant? We may consider the data in the following way:
- 6.2.38                    Two strands of New Testament evidence are noteworthy. First, there are those passages where the personal pronoun is distinctly used of the Holy Spirit, i.e., the "he" passages (e.g., *Mark* 3:29; *Luke* 12:12; *John* 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-15; *Acts* 8:29; 10: 19, 20; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6, 7; 20:28; *Romans* 5:5). Second, there are other passages, i.e., the "it" passages, that may allow of a personal reading but do not demand it (e.g., *Matthew* 1:18; 4:1; 12:28; *Luke* 1:15; *John* 7:39b; *Acts* 1:8; *Romans* 8:26, 27).
- 6.2.39                    After carefully considering the data, one must conclude that reluctance to assign full personhood to the Spirit is unwarranted. The main current of New Testament interpretation is in the line of the "he" passages. These compel us to think equally of the Spirit as God with the Father and Son. One can account for the "it" passages in terms of the "he" passages, but it is simply impossible to account for the "he" passages in terms of the "it" passages. Otherwise, language fails of sense, for, as in the Johannine texts on the Spirit, we are left without meaningful denotation of terms if we impersonalize the pronouns referring to the Spirit but retain the pronouns referring to the Father and to

ourselves as personal. There are other kinds of spirits also referred to that cannot be accounted for on an impersonal reading (note *Matthew* 8:16,29; *John* 4:24; *Hebrews* 1:14; 12:23). In the light of the evidence, the real question seems to be the Spirit's distinctness, not his personhood.

6.2.40 Even if we should reduce the Spirit to the indwelling Christ in the New Testament, the problem of persons in the Godhead is not relieved (save by Christological Subordinationism or Adoptionism) unless we move from a trinitarian to a binitarian formula. This is logically no less severe. While, the risen Christ is not sharply distinguished in the New Testament, he is not identified with the Spirit. The New Testament never says that Christ is the Spirit of God; and if the distinction between Christ and the Spirit is made before the resurrection, why not maintain it after the resurrection?

6.2.41 The only doubtful exception is 2 *Corinthians* 3:17, where the term "Lord" has been understood in both extremes, as Christ and as the Holy Spirit. The sense of the passage is probably the "spirit of freedom" as against the "spirit of bondage" of Judaism (note Alan Richardson, *New Testament Theology*, 1958, pp. 105, 120; and A. Plummer, *Second Corinthians* in the International Critical Commentary, 1948, p. 103). If, as Professor Schweizer says (*op. cit.*, pp. 402, 403), the Lukan conception is crucial to New Testament theology, then the remark by Alan Richardson that among the gospel records Luke alone itemizes and dates the resurrection and ascension of Christ and the coming of the Spirit as separate historical events, assumes distinct significance. As cited from Lionel Thornton earlier (Chapter 4, 4.3.6), it is important to distinguish Christ and the Spirit. Christ is the indwelling content of the Christian life, the Spirit is the quickening cause; and the indwelling of Christ is the effect of the quickening. Note also my discussion in Chapter 9 (9.4.11-22).

6.2.42 It is very difficult to know what to do with the personal language of the New Testament unless the Spirit is personally distinct. Not only in formulas such as the one used at the baptism of Jesus, in the benedictions and salutations, and in the baptismal symbol is the Spirit put on an equal footing with the Father and the Son, but numerous trinitarian passages join his work to the one work of the Godhead (*1 Corinthians* 12:4-6; *Ephesians* 1:3-5, 6-12, 13; 4:4-6; *1 Peter* 1:2,3). In particular, our Lord clearly indicates that he will send the Spirit from the Father (*John* 15:26) and that the Spirit will not attest to himself but to Christ (16:13). A further point of some importance is the parallel established theologically between Christ's relation to the Spirit and our own.

### **The Eternal Procession (*ekporeusis*) of the Holy Spirit**

6.3.1 In both Roman Catholic and Protestant faith in the West there is a broad consensus - held for the most part as an unquestioned assumption - that the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from both the Father and the Son (the *filioque* clause, which enunciates the doctrine of the double procession of the Holy Spirit).

6.3.2 While rejection of the Roman Pontiff's primacy by the Eastern Orthodox Churches has long divided them from the West, this political issue pales in comparison with the intensity of feelings which the Western doctrine of the double procession generates among Eastern Orthodox Christians. Modern theologians on both sides deem the matter to have been in principle resolved; nevertheless, suspicion in the East against the West remains very strong among both secular clergy and the laity because of this issue.

6.3.3 Despite differences on the metaphysical question, the East and the West are agreed as to mission of the Spirit in the world as Creator and Sustainer, and in

implementing the work of Christ in the lives of Christians through regeneration and sanctification.

6.3.4 The form of the teaching is easy to state; the intent is much more problematical, on both sides of the question.

6.3.5 Biblical support for *filioque* is sought in *John* 16:13-15 where Jesus says of the promised Holy Spirit *he shall take (lepsetai) of mine and shall declare it unto you*, where 'of mine' is taken to mean 'proceeding from me' not merely 'take my word or message.' The Western premise is that the coinhering life of the Trinity precludes the taking and receiving from one another except in a processive way. *Spirit of his Son (Galatians 4:6)* is also adduced in support of *filioque*, as are *Spirit of the Son (Romans 8:9)* and *Spirit of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:19)*.

6.3.6 Support for both sides of the argument can be cited from the writings of both Eastern and Western theologians during late patristic and early medieval times, though most citations which can be interpreted as supporting *filioque* occur among Western theologians. In the 9th century Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, objected to *filioque* along with, it would appear, his objections to the presence of Western (Latin) missionaries in orthodox lands (Bulgaria). Oddly, Rome was an exception in the West. Though pressed by Charlemagne to include *filioque* creedally, Rome upheld the doctrine but refused to insert it into the Creed. The renewal recently of a similar protest by Russian Orthodox leadership against the Vatican for sending Roman Catholic missionaries to lands of the former Soviet Union is a striking parallel and raises the question whether *filioque* was, or is today, the central issue or simply part of a protest about jurisdiction. To this day in the East *filioque* symbolizes objections to Western claims to religious suzerainty and Latin theological irredentism.

6.3.7 Eastern theologians continue to insist that metaphysically there can be only one fount of divinity in the Godhead, whereas Western theologians argue that while attributes are ascribed equally to each member of the Godhead paternity belongs uniquely to the Father, filiation uniquely to the Son, but spiration belongs to both. Western medieval theologians appealed to the unambiguous language of Augustine as a standard of Latin theology and biblical understanding: *wherefore let him who can understand the generation of the Son from the Father without time, understand also the procession of the Holy Spirit from both without time (On the Trinity, Book 15.47; many other references could be cited)*.

6.3.8 The language of the *filioque* clause is found in the *Quicumque Vult* (the Athanasian Creed). Though ancient, going back possibly to the mid-fourth century C.E, or more probably to the fifth century, this widely-used confession of faith is not a creed, but was used commonly as a recitation of core Christian beliefs. The relevant text reads (F. J. Badcock, *The History of the Creeds*. London: SPCK, 1930, p. 195, sentences 21-23):

6.3.9 *The Father is made by none nor created nor begotten;  
The Son is from the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten;  
The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son, not made nor created nor begotten,  
but proceeding.*

6.3.10 Such language is reiterated from the fifth century onwards until in the eighth and ninth centuries the words *and from the Son* which define the relation of the Spirit to the Father and Son were added to the Latin version of the Nicene Creed. This is anathema to Eastern theologians. They charge that such tampering with the earliest and most important of the ecumenical creeds legitimizes Eastern suspicions that converting such biblical metaphors into metaphysical statements set the stage for subsequent

revisions of dogma and additions by the West which are not consistent with teachings of the early ecumenical creeds, without consultation with the East.

6.3.11 The doctrine of the double procession became a fixture in English-speaking lands chiefly through Augustine. From Augustine's *On The Trinity* (for example, Book 15.47) Anselm appears to have picked up the concept of love as the key coinhering factor of divine consubstantiality. The Holy Spirit as love appears to serve as the *vinculum* (the bond) within the life of the Godhead. The Father begets. The Son creates. The Holy Spirit is the breathing out of their love (*Monologium* 56). Anselm attempts to explain the metaphysical reality in economic terms. From the inner unity of the Godhead the love is neither begotten nor unbegotten, *yet in some sort it derives its existence from another*. As the Father and Son are separately uncreated and creator, so Love separately is uncreated and creator: *This love is identical with the Father and Son although it has its being from them: that love is regarded as the Breath or Spirit of both since from both breathing in their transcendent way it mysteriously proceeds*.

6.3.12 The questions such formulations raise is whether biblical (or other) metaphors define anything metaphysically about the consubstantiality or coinhering life of the three persons of the Trinity. We employ terms such as *source* and *derive* to describe an eternal reality but not thereby to designate a derivative existence or temporal point. The same applies to terms such as to *beget*, *begotten*, *unbegotten* and *breathes*, *proceeds*, *emanates*.

6.3.13 Patristic formulation declares the Holy Spirit to be the third *hypostasis* in the Godhead, coequal with the Father and the Son. The traditional terms used to describe the relations within the Trinity are: Of the Father, *source* or *unbegotten*. Of the Son, *begotten* or *filiation*. Of the Holy Spirit, *procession* or *breathing*. This last is the language of John 15:26: *the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father*.

6.3.14 I take Augustine and Anselm to be saying that in the eternal life of God the Son gives himself in responsive love to the Father and to the Father's will through the Spirit. But we must recognize our limitations as to any metaphysical implications implicit in terms such as filiation and procession. Our problem is how to comprehend the reality of distinct personhood within the Godhead. We do not know what such terms mean so far as the inner being of God is concerned. We use them because they are key terms in the biblical statements about Jesus Christ and statements attributed to him.

6.3.15 During the past century, the most serious attempt at bridging the gap between East and West was made at the Conference held at Bonn, Prussia, in 1874-75 between Old Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican and some other representatives (the Old Catholics had been excommunicated by the Bishop of Rome for rejecting the 1870 papal dogmas). Conclusions of the Conference were embodied in five Articles and six Paragraphs and may be found in Lukas Vischer (editor), *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ* (London: SPCK, World Council of Churches Faith and Order Paper 103) 1981, pp. 97 - 100). An abridged version is published in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. 2, pp. 552-554 (New York: Harper and Brothers (1877), 6th edition, 1931). Western supporters of *filioque* deem these to be concessions to Eastern Orthodoxy.

The four Articles are:

6.3.16 1. Acceptance of the ecumenical creeds and dogmatic decisions of the ancient, undivided church.

6.3.17 2. Recognition that *filioque* was added to the Creed in an ecclesiastically illegitimate way.

6.3.18 3. Profession of the presentation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as given by the Fathers of the undivided church.

6.3.19 4. Rejection of any conception or mode of expression which involves the assumption of two principles, or *archai*, or *aitai* in the Trinity.

The six Paragraphs accept and re-state the teaching of St. John of Damascus:

6.3.20 1. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as the beginning (*arche*), the cause (*aitia*), the source (*pege*) of the Godhead.

6.3.21 2. The Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son, though we designate him the Spirit of the Son.

6.3.22 3. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son.

6.3.23 4. The Holy Spirit is the image of the Son, who is the image of the Father by whom the revealing Spirit is produced through the Son.

6.3.24 5. The Holy Spirit is the personal production out of the Father, belonging to the Son but not from the Son, as expressive of the Logos.

6.3.25 6. The Holy Spirit forms the mediation between the Father and the Son and is united to the Father through the Son.

6.3.26 The language of *filioque* must not be taken to say that the Son together with the Father is the source of the Spirit in the eternal being of God. The East has properly objected to such an implicate. Rather, it should be taken to mean that the Spirit came and still comes to his work in creation, at the incarnation and in redemption from the Father through the Son.

6.3.27 It is not likely that in our time the emotional gulf between the East and the West will be bridged. The West must reassure the East that *filioque* does not undercut the truth that the Father is the unique first cause in the Trinity, and accept that the proper sense of procession is that of through the Son (*per filium; di'Uiou*) in order to maintain consubstantiality and coinherence.

6.3.28 The issue appears to be to find a metaphysical basis for the distinction between the persons in the Trinity. Eastern thought strives to conserve the distinctness of the persons in their activity but always as action from within the coinhering life of the Godhead; whereas for the West, following Augustine, love exhibits the internal divine relations, but the action is of the one individual God.

6.3.29 It is best not to take *proceeds* from the Father as a metaphysical statement, but as signifying that the Holy Spirit proceeds through the Son as the creating and redemptive medium. He does not receive his essence from the Son: *he shall take what is mine and declare it to you (John 167:15)*. I take this to be the path some Eastern Orthodox theologians favor.

### **Trinity in Unity**

6.4.1 In the light of the foregoing data, it should be clear that for Christians the incarnation of the Son at Bethlehem and the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost compel radical revision of unipersonal monotheistic belief. The immanent, eternal Trinity, known by divine self-disclosure, means that God is not the lonely God whose world becomes the logical "over-against-himself" to make him personal. Nor does the doctrine of the Trinity suggest that God is "coming-to-be" in the world through the modalities of Son and Spirit. The eternal Son and Spirit are God. They have their reality on the other side of the gulf that separates the infinite being of God from the finite world. The triune God is infinite,

changeless, eternal, the glorious Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer, who has full resources within himself for the perfection of his inner life.

- 6.4.2            Nevertheless, the early Christians affirmed faith in the Son of God on the basis of unflinching monotheism. We cannot grasp the theology of the Gospel unless we see that New Testament Christians believed in both the eternity of the Son and the unity of God. The theological struggles from the second to the fourth centuries are best understood as attempts to articulate this faith in face of the difficulty of utilizing terms and categories unsuited to the inner realities of the Gospel. It is false, therefore, to say that the simplicities of early Judean faith in Jesus were corrupted by alien Greek metaphysical speculation. Rather, through the Christian Gospel which proclaimed the self-revelation of God there was injected into the intellectual climate of the time evidence about the nature of God which the existing categories could not assimilate. The Church was compelled to decide whether to jettison the evidence or to revise the categories. Christians chose to do the latter. The choice we confront is very much the same.
- 6.4.3            We must think of unity in terms of persons and interpersonal relations rather than in terms of a certain kind of logical abstraction. An excellent discussion of this point which has influenced my thinking is that of Leonard Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, London, 1955, pp. 89-96, 104, 105, 183. There is more than one way of speaking about unity; more that is, than the undifferentiated abstraction "one," or the absence of multiplicity. There are inclusive as against exclusive conceptions of unity, such as the unity of personal life in the complexity of being a thinking, feeling, and acting creature; the unity of husband and wife; the unity of the Church; the unity of Christ and the Church; and the unity of the Godhead.
- 6.4.4            Further, the question is greater than simply exclusive or inclusive, of simple or complex conceptions of unity. We must ask also whether analogies which are personal or impersonal, dynamic or static, living being or abstraction are more suited to the case in point. The revelation of God as living and acting is something other than a conclusion derived by subtracting away elements of multiplicity (i.e., the *via negationis*).
- 6.4.5            Professor Hodgson's point therefore is a good one. That internal complexity is a sign of imperfect unity could be said only if all approximations to unity were to be measured by a scale of degrees of absence of internal multiplicity. But this is not so, if the degree of unity achieved is to be measured instead in proportion to the intensity of the unifying power in the life of the whole.
- 6.4.6            Even a monadic conception of God must cope with the problem of the duality of thought and thinker. If God is revealed as tripersonal, then it may be best to think that the unity of the Godhead is more intense than any finite unity known to us. In human personality, the degree of normality achieved depends upon how intense the unification of the elements of personality is. In God, the revealed elements unified are each fully personal. The fact is that so far as we know, no one can be personal in isolation; God is revealed not as the lonely God but as tripersonal.
- 6.4.7            Should we fall back upon a conception of unity that is undifferentiated, the problem remains that we have no actual experience of such a thing. At least it is doubtful that we do, and I can think of no instance of such a thing's existing. Such abstract unities cannot approximate the internal complexity of living beings. The higher up we go on the scale of living beings, the more complex they are, and the more intense must be the power of their inner unification.
- 6.4.8            From personal experience we know what inclusive types of unity are. In Scripture the comparisons between the divine life and human life, especially in the body of the Church, suggest that more than mere analogy is involved. We believe that the

essential realities of divine and human life are revealed by God in terms of the complexity of persons in interpersonal relations.

### **Trinitarian Faith**

6.5.1 By accepting at face value the evidence that demands thinking of the full personhood of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we can give a rational, though partial, account of the personal God. As indicated earlier, the doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo* tells us not only that the world had a beginning by the will of God but also that the world is of such and such a kind. This means that God's personhood is self-sufficient in the perfection of his inner life. The relations of the Trinity are inscrutable to us, but the doctrine that God is love and the doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo* are fully consistent with the doctrine that God is triune. In God there is the mutuality of perfect communion. What is love to a unipersonal being? The doctrine of the Trinity is therefore the high point of revelation about the nature of God. It declares that no matter how vast or how important the universe is, none of it is necessary to the perfection of the inner life of God.

6.5.2 The completeness of revelation in the doctrine that God is triune leads us to say that tripersonal monotheism is more intelligible than unipersonal monotheism. When we see that in the Incarnation the eternal second person of the Trinity actually became man, then we arrive at an apprehension of the essential nature of God. Christians cannot avoid the primacy of Christological interpretation for the whole range of their theological ideas.

6.5.3 Because of faith in the finality of the Christological revelation, Christians affirm with confidence that God is not seven or twelve or fifty-one but triune. That God is triune rests not upon inherent natural trinities in logic or nature but upon the faith that God has fully revealed himself in Jesus Christ and the descent of the Spirit. When we share this life in the Father by the Son and through the Holy Spirit, we are convinced that the biblical revelation is terminal and complete.

6.5.4 Thereby also we perceive the significance of the truths that God *sent* his Son to the Cross and that God was *in* Christ reconciling the world to himself. As the author of redemption, God is not only the object of sacrifice but also the subject of sacrifice.

6.5.5 Finally, the distinctness of tripersonal life in God is fully consistent with the doctrine of the resurrection and eternal life for the individual. Contrary to views which reject the continuance of discrete personal life, Christian belief in the future life as perfect, personal, and distinct rests on the doctrine that it will be essentially of persons in interpersonal relations.

### **Trinitarian Life**

6.6.1 Christians should enter more fully into the significance of the Trinity as a way of life and not only as a theological dogma. The foregoing data should encourage us to do so without hesitation. Historically, trinitarian theology simply attempted to express the new way of trinitarian religion which the New Testament Christians knew in Christ. The doctrine is not metaphysical obscurity hung on a sky hook. It declares God to be more than numinous mystique.

6.6.2 Trinitarian worship enriches Christian experience. We are helped be if we grasp the biblical truth of the unity of interpersonal relations that characterizes not only the life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but also our lives in God and in one another. The crucial passage, rarely seen in this light, is *John 17*. In fact, the entire Gospel can be subtitled "the Gospel of the Trinity." If we wish to discover the biblical definition of unity then it stands in the significance of these words,

- 6.6.3 *I do not pray for these only, but also for those who are to believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me, [John 17:20-23, RSV].*
- 6.6.4 *I in thee, thou in me, that they may be one in us* -- these phrases indicate integrity of discrete personal life and unity of interpersonal life. Love is the bond of perfect union (*Colossians* 3:14) that joins us to God in the redeeming work of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (*Ephesians* 4:2-6).
- 6.6.5 The perfection of our Lord's humanity is the revelatory historical instance of this. In Scripture his life is the parallel to our lives. One may note passages like *Romans* 8:5-11, and especially verse 11, for this truth. While the phrases *Spirit of Christ* and *Spirit of God* are used interchangeably, this is done in a special sense. As Jesus received the Spirit, so we receive the Spirit from Jesus. As the Spirit who came upon the Messiah was God's Spirit, so the Spirit who indwells us is God's Spirit. We re partakers of his humanity as members of a new race and body by the same Spirit.
- 6.6.6 Paul says that the Father who raised up Jesus from the dead quickens us also because the Spirit who quickens us is the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead. Our God is the Lord of life and death, of time and eternity, of past, present and future. What he did for Christ he will do for us because we share the same indwelling Spirit. By this Spirit we are made partakers of Christ and joint heirs with Christ. By this same Spirit we cry *Abba, Father* (*Romans* 8:14-17), and look to the day of glory when we shall know as we re know, giving praise that is justly due to Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, blessed forever.

# CREATION

Samuel J. Mikolaski

## OUTLINE

- 7.0.0        **The Concept of Creation and Etiological Myths**
- 7.1.0        **Transformation of Scientific Postulates**
- 7.2.0        **Modern Theories of the Origin of the Universe**
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- 7.14.0       **Grace and the World**

### 7.0.0                    **The Concept of Creation and Etiological Myths**

7.0.1                    Two *in the beginning* passages in the Bible comprise the framework of the Christian paradigm regarding the origin of the world. They appear to be autonomous pronouncements which nevertheless not only cohere contextually. They also function as hinges upon which doors of understanding the universe and human life swing open.

7.0.2                    *Genesis* 1:1 majestically and cleanly announces, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*. This declaration states that the world was created by God *ex nihilo*, not out of previously existing material. He brought the universe into existence by command and actualization, by divine fiat and fulfillment.

7.0.3                    This truth is generic to biblical teaching about origins. The writer of *Hebrews* (11:3) declares it to be an article of faith - meaning an understanding borne out by a rational conviction as to its truth, as well as by divine revelation - that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear; that is, not out of what was visible; not out of what was palpable. In the *Psalms*, that God alone is the Creator is often specified, along with statements that the world exists in a state of absolute dependence upon the Creator. For example, *Psalms* 33:6 parallels the *Genesis* account. God created the universe by his Word and Spirit,

*By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,  
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.*

7.0.4                    The other "in the beginning" passage is John 1:1-3,

*In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.  
He was in the beginning with God;  
All things were made through him,*

*and without him was not anything made that was made.*

Any Stoic could have said the first clause *In the beginning was the Word*, but no Stoic could have said *and the Word was with God*; nor, *all things were made through him*; nor, as John says later, *and the Word was made flesh*. The concept of the Word as the rational principle of the universe was common intellectual coinage in the ancient world, for example in Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* which praises the immanent, universal Word. John says not only that the Word is God, but that he is personal and that he acts personally to create. Through the transcendent, eternal Word the transcendent, eternal Creator created the world *ex nihilo*.

7.0.5 The biblical revelation relates the work of creation to the Trinity. The world's existence is not posited as the rationale for the personhood of a uni-personal God. God does not need the world for personhood and relationships to become realities, nor to give them credibility. The independent God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit creates. This is uniquely Biblical. Consider the following:

7.0.6 The Lord, **God the Father**, is the Creator: *I am the Lord who made all things ... I made the earth, and created man upon it (Isaiah 44:24; 45:12, 18; note also 42:5, and Nehemiah 9:6)*. **God the Son** is Creator and Sustainer, says Paul (*Colossians 1:16-17*): *in him all things were created ... created through him and for him ... He is before all things, and in him all things hold together*. To this may be added the word in *Hebrews 1:2* that God has spoken to us through his Son, *through whom also he created the world*. **God the Holy Spirit** is Creator. In *Genesis 1:2* occur the familiar words *and the Spirit of God was moving upon the face of the waters*. The NIV renders "moving" as *hovering over the waters*. Again, teaching in the *Psalms* parallels the *Genesis* account (104:30): *when thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created*.

7.0.7 Unwarranted historical genetic explanation which results in attrition of its truth claims and undermines uniqueness has become a standard way of rationalizing the *Genesis* creation narrative. It is widely assumed that for their own purposes Priestly and Yahwistic redactors drastically revised Eastern sagas and myths while suppressing those elements deemed to be uncongenial to Israelitish thought. Chief among these are the Epic of Gilgamesh and the Babylonian Creation Epic known as the *Enuma Elish*.

7.0.8 The latter recounts the evolution of deities from primeval chaos, among whom Marduk emerges as pre-eminent. In the struggle between chaos and the heavenly deities Marduk slays Tiamat the female principle and divides her into two parts. These become the earth and the canopy of heaven. The stars regulate time. From this are drawn parallels with *Genesis*, including the primeval chaos, the solidity of the firmament, the time-regulating functions of heavenly bodies, and the creation of mankind from within the counsel of the gods and from the blood of Marduk. It is assumed that such myths are certain to be historically the sources of Israel's heritage. This is not convincing, any more than that because John uses Logos to describe Christ that Christ is in reality a conceptual spin-off from Stoic doctrine, not ontologically the eternal Word.

7.0.9 Antony Flew, the prominent British philosopher of recent years, and an articulate atheist, makes two points about the *Genesis* account. First, he cautions against misunderstanding myth, which he distinguishes from legends and works of fiction. A story may be myth, he says, but not every myth is a *mere* myth. Second, he emphasizes "how *different* the *Genesis* story is from any of its opposite numbers," which is to say genetic explanations fail to meet the test of the narrative's unique contents and authorial intent.

7.0.10 He argues that the *Genesis* creation account contains a literal core, which is *Nothing but God ... there is no suggestion of a stuff existent alongside God out of which he fashioned the world as a modeller may mould his clay to bear the impress he wants*

("Creation," a conversation between A. N Flew and D. M. McKinnon, *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, 1955). It is useful to quote Flew's summary (p. 173):

*We now have three elements which are essential to any interpretation of Genesis, which is to be an interpretation and not a travesty. First: the insistence on absolute dependence; second: the rejection of any really fundamental dualism; and third: the suggestion of certain conduct and attitudes as appropriate. Surely there is a fourth (which many would treat as the prime point) - the assertion that the world had a beginning?*

I agree with his analysis. The *Genesis* narrative is paradigmatically unique. At its core it bears little resemblance to the Babylonian myths.

7.0.11 From the beginning of the Christian era Christians have admired and respected the universe as the handiwork of God. One is reminded of Athenagoras' delightful tribute to the beauty and harmony of the universe in his apology to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius late in the second century of the Christian era, which I have previously cited. Modern science enlarges and strengthens grounds for wonder and admiration. The frontiers of human knowledge have been extended so far that today the vastness and complexity of the universe is impossible to grasp. Along with this, Athenagoras' injunction that Christians worship the Creator not the creation - a reflection of biblical teaching - is more achievable today than ever before, due largely to scientific demystification of nature and the unmasking of superstitions about nature. It is ironic that in modern scientifically and technologically sophisticated societies re-mystification of nature is on the rise, including superstition, even among Christians who advance string-pulling religious formulae to jerk God here or there at will.

7.0.12 In the Psalms evidence of how vast and wonderful the universe is serves as a building-block for faith in God's providence, not as reinforcement for cosmic, existential angst.

7.0.13 Consider the tongue-in-cheek estimate some years ago of British space-scientist Desmond King-Hale as to what possibilities there are for sentient, communicating life forms elsewhere in the universe. (One is reminded of the listening post projects such as Project Ozma in 1960 to try to detect, or be detected by, other creatures in space.) Desmond King-Hale's score-card concerns only our galaxy, let alone other galaxies. Also, he proposed this score-card over thirty years ago. Since then numbers have been revised upwards as to the size and density of the universe and the possibilities, even chances, for sentient life to be detected somewhere.

7.0.14 His score-card: Our galaxy numbers about 100,000 million (100 billion) stars. Suppose 10,000 million are stars with planets (1 in 10). Suppose further that upwards of one-half of these have some sort of biosphere (in the Solar system it is 3 out of 9). That would number 5,000 million. Next, suppose that up to one-half of these, 2,500 million, have chemical conditions present (methane, ammonia, hydrogen, water, plus electrical discharges through it) which might form an environment conducive to some form of life. Among these there might be some amino acids which could be conducive to living matter appearing through the production of complex organic molecules. Next, let us say that only 1 in 5 of these have advanced communities, some of which may never progress, but where nature through evolution throws up intelligence. That number becomes 500,000,000. Suppose further that of these, 1 in 5 wish to signal, namely, 100,000,000. Finally, suppose that out of the 100,000,000 only 1 in 100 is signaling now. We might therefore conjecture that there could be 1,000,000 planets signaling now!

7.0.15 While no results have come from listening posts, for me such speculation enhances the Christian's appreciation of the vastness of God's world. I believe the time-factor alone precludes distant space travel beyond the Solar System (though some

propose that the arrow of time can be altered or reversed). As well, these factors preclude another creature resembling us anywhere else in the universe, which is designed to live under conditions at all similar to our own, from either traveling to us or communicating with us. Mental telepathy is merely conjecture. Consider that if "biologically" speaking another creature exists for whom our comprehensible minute of time signifies one thousand years (say under sub-zero conditions), pulses between such creatures and ourselves would be undetectable and indiscipherable.

7.0.16

This tongue-in-cheek score-card is a jolt to reality. I do not believe there is scientific warrant for thinking that sentient life exists in other worlds, and I find no warrant in the Scriptures for such a view. The universe is vast - far larger than we can ever hope to comprehend - and getting larger as science pushes back the frontiers of time. God is its author and Sustainer. Any explanation of the universe which denies its inherent rationality brooks explanation. Science is helping us to probe the mind of the Creator, who alone is worthy of worship,

*It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,  
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;  
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,  
and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;  
who brings princes to nought,  
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.  
(Isaiah 40:22-23)*

7.1.0

### **Transformation of Scientific Postulates**

7.1.1

If it is the case that contemporary theology is absorbed with theological method (take, for example, the work of Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 1992), questions about scientific method within the scientific community are even more widespread and probing. Karl Popper led the way in contemporary discussion (note his autobiographical notes *Unended Quest*, 1976, which were abstracted from the two volumes on his work edited by Paul A. Schilpp), followed by writers such as Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1970; and Imre Lakatos, *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes*, 1978, to mention but two. Popper's thesis is that science passes through dogmatic phases characterized by the comfort of regularity. Only when a critical phase sets in so that error elimination can begin work on dogma do new knowledge and theories emerge, which themselves become patterns of expectation. Science grows by cycles of challenge to categories by evidence; by the method of proposing bold hypotheses and exposing them to severe criticism.

7.1.2

Modern transformation of scientific postulates is striking. As a non-scientist, my comments can be only limited in scope and may be naive. Return to theistic orientation as a more authentic way to view the universe is attracting a surprising number of scientists, and the cross-over between theology and science is being investigated afresh. This suggests to me that new generations of theologians must arise who, while accepting the Christian claim to revelation are friendlier to the natural sciences and empiricism (in the sense of the pursuit of fact, both historical and scientific) than has been the case. I proposed this in my comments on Revelation when I argued that it is better to speak of the Revelation of God as Creator and the Revelation of God as Redeemer rather than General Revelation and Special Revelation. I believe that Natural Theology in our time needs to be integrated with the rest of the theological disciplines in a unified effort to learn of God as the author of creation.

7.1.3

Rationalist assumptions inherited by Renaissance science have been jettisoned or revised. These include: The idea of substance in the form of hard bits of stuff as the nature of reality, or as primal being in Aristotelian and Thomist metaphysics. As the building block of reality the atom has been transformed into a dynamic conception. The

idea of causation as absolute mechanical uniformity has largely been abandoned, undermined by David Hume. Parallel to this is a new hunt for final causes such as has been postulated in Process Philosophy and Theology. These are affecting the practice of science in fresh ways.

7.1.4 While observation, formulation of new theory and verification displaced Rationalism, Karl Popper argues that received notions of induction are a myth. Bertrand Russell had suggested that we must adopt a principle of induction which in its turn was not based on induction. Adoption of this principle, Popper comments, marked the limits of empiricism. Popper argues that there is no such thing as induction, meaning that learning from the facts does not occur apart from prior conjecture or hypothesis. The alleged inductive method of science, he adds, *had to be replaced by the method of (dogmatic) trial and (critical) error elimination (Unended Quest, p. 52)*. Indeterminacy in scientific method appears to parallel indeterminacy in physics. Objection to Popper is chiefly on grounds that scientific method is subject to more rational constraint than bold hypotheses. Popper would reply that hypothesis is a function of rationality, sometimes operating as hunch or guess which moves one to explore new ideas, but it does not derive solely by instruction from facts. Observation is controlled by some theory or theoretical problem.

7.1.5 Mechanical, deistic conceptions of the world have broken down with the formulation of Quantum Physics in science, including the Principle of Indeterminacy. Conclusions can be reached only on grounds of normal or probable behavior, not on grounds of mechanical causation. Discontinuity has revived contingency as a real factor in the universe. Add to this Chaos Theory which, despite its name, appears to yield conclusions on as yet unpredictable patterns inherent in nature.

7.1.6 There remains a key metaphysical problem: how to account for the actualizing of life and form in nature. Is a completely naturalistic answer credible in view of the displacement of former categories and the likelihood that some of today's will also be left behind? To believe that impersonal matter, which may have a limiting potency, and randomness by means of organic naturalism, have produced a rational universe has become unpalatable to a significant number of scientists. Note for example, the work of Russell Stannard, *Doing Away with God: Creation and the Big Bang*, 1993; John Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist*, 1994; and Frank J. Tipler's Omega Point theory in his *The Physics of Immortality*, 1994, among others. The alternative to Naturalism is some form of Panpsychism or Panentheism. Christians hold that creation of the world by a transcendent, personal God reaches to the heart of the matter.

## 7.2.0 **Modern Theories of the Origin of the Universe**

7.2.1 The universe is made up of receding galaxies. Scientific radio measurement of the recession suggests an expanding universe of dimensions much larger than was known even a generation ago. The universe surpasses the capacity of our minds to wrap around it. The descriptive language being used today is baffling and at times deceptive. For example, a layman can well wonder what it means to say that the universe creates space and time as it expands, but it does not expand into something.

7.2.2 If by "universe" one means "Everything That Exists" then there is only one universe. Philosophers of the past and most modern scientists hold that only one kind of world is logically possible. Recent theory poses the possibility of plural universes. *Many and strange are the universes which drift like bubbles in the foam upon the river of time*, said Arthur C. Clarke. Stephen Hawking has posited that there are microscopically minute universes, "baby universes," constantly bubbling up on the river of time most of which are re-absorbed in a flash, but some of which by cosmic forces detach to form vast conglomerates of stars and planets through expansion (an "inflation" or a "Big Bang") if gravity and anti-gravity forces should not balance. On this thesis our universe is an

accident, a quirk of fate, "just one of those things that happen from time to time," as another advocate of this view has observed. John Leslie of the University of Guelph (*Universes*, 1989) argues for multiple worlds in the sense of vast regions each of which develops unique characteristics, one of which, in contrast to others, has life-permitting characteristics. He thinks that multiple universes allow for fine-tuning in one or more of them for minute balancing of constants which account for the staggering ingenuity and beauty of our planet. Otherwise, some theory of God or of a divine principle is plausible to account for this life-permitting character of a universe, i.e., that which makes evolution possible at all.

7.2.3 Einstein's general relativity theory draws the line between old and modern cosmologies. The **Gaseous Mass Theory** was proposed earlier in this century (Lemaitre, A.S. Eddington, James Jeans) according to which there was a primeval gaseous universe in which something happened to launch a process of expansion. Why it should have expanded and not contracted appears to be fortuitous, not unlike the unaccountable swerving of Leucippus' primeval atom in the eternal rain of atoms. Some proposed that the finger of God did it. This seemed too easy an explanation without accounting, as well, for the existence of the primeval gas.

7.2.4 Later, Lemaitre revised his thesis to say that the universe originated from a dense conglomerate called by him a primeval atom. According to this, the universe originated at a finite time in the past and expands to an infinite size at an infinite future time. Galaxies evolved during this time, formed from matter which existed in an exceedingly dense state. The British astro-physicist Bernard Lovell remarked that this would have been at least 100 million tons per cubic centimeter. Following the expansion after thousands of millions of years, conditions applicable to Einstein's formulation would have been reached. Subsequently, clusters of galaxies formed. The origin of the galaxies does not coincide with the beginning of time. There remained the problem of accounting for the existence of the primeval atom.

7.2.5 The fine-tuning concept, or the Anthropic Principle, employed as key feature by a number of writers, including John Polkinghorne, John Leslie and John Barrow, on grounds other than randomness and chance, attempts to account for the subtle conditions which are hospitable to life.

7.2.6 Views such as those of Leslie extend earlier discussion: Will the expansion ultimately cease and be followed by contraction; or, is the cycle repeated - the concertina effect of maximum expansion, then of maximum contraction; or, will the expansion go on with ever decreasing momentum until the galaxies are finally dissipated? Some religious implications of these views are: First, was the creation and idiosyncratic behavior of the primeval atom a divine act? Second, the Materialist declines to explain the origin of the universe within the framework of existing scientific knowledge. The universe just is; however, if one had the opportunity to study the initial conditions, then scientific explanation would be possible and interesting! Third, one can evade the problem by positing that the primeval atom was not the beginning but a state of maximum contraction of the universe which had existed for an eternity of time.

7.2.7 In our time, two competing views of the origin of the universe have engaged discussion.

7.2.8 First, Fred Hoyle's **Steady State Theory**, proposed in 1948 along with several others. In reality this is a continuous creation theory, not a theory of a static state. The beginning of all things is inaccessible, he argued.

7.2.9 While on the Expansion Theory the average spatial density is decreasing, this is not the case with the continuous creation theory. As galaxies recede over the horizon, new ones are continually being created. Hoyle's cosmological principle is that the

universe would appear to be the same to any observer, wherever he or she is situated in space. The universe is the same throughout space and time. The implication of this is that there is no beginning of time at all and, as for the future, the universe extends infinitely into space so that any intelligent being would be surrounded by galaxies without end. The universe is stable, infinite and eternal.

7.2.10 Among the majority of scientists today the theory of an **Expanding Universe**, based upon the Big Bang theory, has for the moment captured the field and appears to be impregnable. Stephen Hawking's book *A Brief History of Time*, 1988 has become a world best-seller. Modern cosmologies start either from a moment of creation in the remote past, or with a universe that already exists. No attempt is made to explain where the matter/energy came from. In that respect, all the theories are inadequate. At bottom the critical question is not how do things change, say by evolution or by divine providence or both, but why is there anything at all? And, is the issue for both the ignominy of the final Black Hole?

7.2.11 Theories as to the origin of the Solar System are chiefly, first, the **Nebular Hypothesis** of the past two centuries, in several forms, according to which there was a primeval nebula of rotating rarefied gas which cooled slowly and by gravitational attraction formed the sun and planets of the Solar System. This theory was undermined by questions as to whether matter would actually coalesce in the manner described, instead of into much smaller segments such as Saturn's rings.

7.2.12 Second, in the **Encounter Theory** it was proposed that as another star passed ours gravitational attraction pulled them around each other. Eventually they spun apart, leaving gases which condensed into small fragments which were subsequently accreted into larger bodies to form planets. One question raised was whether such close encounter would allow orbits of the planets so far removed from the epicenter.

7.2.13 Third, the **Accretion Theory** is that cold particles of dust and gas formed the planets by gradual accretion. The earth does not derive from a single major event, but from a long, gradual process of successive accumulations of fragments, in a manner not unlike asteroid bombarding of the earth.

7.2.14 Many astronomers now accept that the Solar System evolved from a cloud of gas and dust. Beyond the question of the ultimate origin of the cloud and, for that matter, of everything else, is the issue more recently raised, as it has been since ancient times: Why is our world so uniquely hospitable to various forms of life. We are left with the problem that the universe is at least 15 billion years old; that it is vast beyond imagination; and, that our earth which, along with the other planets of the Solar System, is at least four and one-half billion years old, and appears to be unique, though not necessarily so on grounds of statistical probability.

7.2.15 Will scientists be able to fashion living cells? While reports of success have been premature, I believe that for Christians this is a non-issue; that it is in the same class as the argument opposing space travel because "it was not God's intent, and that if it had been he would have adapted us biologically for it." I am not a scientist, but I believe scientists may very well in the future do so, although I have read opinions by some scientists who claim it is not possible and never will be.

7.2.16 Certain chemical syntheses have produced activity which is (superficially, some say) virtually identical to living cells, but have not to this date it is claimed approximated the complex inner structures of cells. Transition from a conservate to a living cell is probably more difficult than describing evolution. Needed are a DNA-like copying system, and a membrane which not only furnishes protective demarkation, but also is active to let some substances in and others out.

7.2.17 The theory that life arose spontaneously, by chance combinations of molecules present in primordial soup, is to me fantasy. Reaction to such theses of randomness and chance are stimulating various formulations of the Anthropic Principle. Can the calculation for such a probability be made, and is it credible? Other claims are equally fantastic. For example, that the building blocks of life fell to earth, or were flown in by some power from some other part of the universe, as is seriously held by one world-famous scientist in Southern California. Theologians and scientists alike should learn and re-learn to separate conjecture from fact and reasoned argument.

7.2.18 Scientists may be able in the future to synthesize a living cell. At the molecular level the line between living and non-living things is not clearly drawn and the words "life" and "living" become ambiguous. If we say that a virus is a "living thing" then has it not already been created by scientists?

7.2.19 I maintain that for Christians the matter should be regarded as a non-issue because "creation" by a scientist will never be *ex nihilo*. That belongs to God. Creation by humans means organizing the pre-existing "stuff" of the universe in a novel way. As complex as that task may be with regard to a living cell, it is synthesis not creation *ex nihilo*. Human beings, created in the image of God, may well be able to do that some day, but they will be no more (and that is considerable) than agents of the Creator. It will mean that what we discern to be going on inside our living bodies will be replicated by setting the process in motion outside the body.

### 7.3.0 **The Darwinist Evolution Hypothesis**

7.3.1 Debate among Christians about evolution is skewed by two factors:

7.3.2 First, incontestably, advocates of the theory of naturalistic evolution - the paradigmatic home of modern Materialism and Atheism - have become intolerant of criticism. An arrogant, dismissive air characterizes their environment, as if to say, "We've found The-Key-To-Everything. Why are you so dumb as not to recognize the fact?" A new cultural establishment has emerged which has an entrenched mind-set and appears impervious to and resentful of criticism. Rightly or wrongly, many Christians instinctively fear the evolutionary hypothesis because they fear and resent what they perceive to be a powerful establishment mentality which they identify with the dehumanizing of humanity, the secularization of American society, the relativizing of values and the resurgence of nihilism.

7.3.3 An atmosphere of criticism has not disappeared among advocates of naturalistic evolution, but outside their circles the perception is that criticism is eschewed lest a process of error elimination become too damaging to dogma. Thus, the biological sense of evolution - meaning gradual biological change - for which there is overwhelming evidence is overshadowed by the philosophical sense of evolution which concludes that mankind has evolved from animals wholly by natural means through animal development and that human nature and capacities have no ultimate significance.

7.3.4 A chorus of voices in recent years has been raised against this alleged mind-set. For example, the jurist Phillip Johnson, whose recent books *Darwin on Trial*, 1991, and *Reason in the Balance*, 1995, focus on attitudes, the rules of evidence and error elimination, and criticism. The dialogue is refreshing and useful. Note examples published in the *Los Angeles Times* (November 3 and 10, 1990); and the review of *Pandas and People* in the *Wall Street Journal*, November 14, 1994, followed by reader responses, December 5, 1994.

7.3.5 Tom Bethel, a media fellow at the Hoover Institution, wrote in an Op-Ed piece that the problem Christians face is *an unwarranted dogmatism about evolution that is pervasive in the biology profession*, (*Wall Street Journal*, December 9, 1986) which

drove some to seek legal remedies to teach creationism in the schools. At issue is a dogmatic assumption that evolution is not a theory but a fact. This fails to recognize or to come to grips with non-scientific elements in various forms of the theory. Popper's thesis of the paradigmatic filter through which data are viewed neatly applies. A shock wave went through the biological studies community some years ago when ideological insiders blew the whistle on unfounded theory. In comments reported in *The Observer* of London by Tom Davey (August 16, 1981), Niles Eldridge of the New York Museum of Natural History wrote that *the current theory is for the most part consensus, not proof*; and that it had been accepted for a generation *largely because of the persuasiveness of a few highly talented biologists*.

7.3.6 Also, Bethel reports a storm of protest over a British Museum pamphlet which began one paragraph *If the theory of evolution is true...* Comment in *Nature* was that most scientists would rather lose their right hand than begin such a sentence with *If...* Museum staff replied that evolution remains a theory not a doctrine, which scientists are free to replace with alternatives. Others also have attacked received opinion with concepts such as "building plans" of organisms to displace the "common ancestor" thesis.

7.3.7 At that time, the debate stemmed from an address Colin Patterson, a senior paleontologist at the British Museum of Natural History, gave in New York in 1981. He startled the audience by remarking that there was *not one thing that he knew about evolution*. He went on to say *Darwinism may explain why ducks have webbed feet. But does not explain why ducks exist at all* (*The Observer* article noted in 7.3.5). Bethel adds an anecdote of interest: In a conversation he had with a staff member at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the staff member *expressed frustration at the dogmatism and authoritarianism that saturate evolutionary biology. One day Gareth Nelson, the chairman of the ichthyology department at the museum, characterized the typical paleontologist's search for ancestral species in the rocks as follows: "We've got to have some ancestor. We'll pick those. 'Why?' 'Because we know they have to be there, and these are the best candidates.' That's by and large the way it has worked. I am not exaggerating.*" Sadly, cases have been documented of professors who have lost jobs or been shifted because they did not toe a party line.

7.3.8 While the foregoing anecdotes, plus accounts of fraud such as the Piltdown Man Hoax, may account for some of the frustration and fear of Christians, it is no excuse for Christian ideological blindness. One could just as well turn that argument around against Christians because of the dreadful cases of fraud and moral turpitude among a few clergy and other religious leaders in recent years. Evolutionary philosophical dogmatism should not preclude objective consideration of scientific data. Not long after Darwin put forward his theory in the middle of the nineteenth century, thoughtful assessments began to be advanced by Christian scholars. These included men who today are regarded as icons of fundamentalist Christianity, such as Charles Hodge and his son Alexander, James McCash and B. B. Warfield, all of Princeton. There were many others, including a number of contributors to *The Fundamentals*, the booklets which sparked development of the Fundamentalist movement in the early decades of this century. In later Fundamentalism evolution was regarded as a prime enemy. For many years this virtually ended efforts by conservative theologians to interpret evolution as a part of the created order. David N. Livingstone has recounted that story in detail in his *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders*, 1987.

7.3.9 Since World War II, efforts by evangelicals to revive studies which attempt to correlate evolutionary theory with the doctrine of creation have made considerable headway, chiefly through the American Scientific Affiliation, an organization of scientists who are Christians, but their efforts have been significantly overshadowed by the Creationism debate of recent years. Concrete scientific data about the age of the universe and the earth, and questions about the mechanism of biological change pass the evangelical community like ships in the night.

- 7.3.10 It is beyond the scope of these notes to detail helpful work on these questions in the fields of geology and biology by scientists who are Christians. I think of Professor Gordon Winder, a geologist at the University of Western Ontario in Canada who before and after retirement, as an ardent inerrantist about the Bible was, as well, an ardent defender of evolution, an argument he made on biblical grounds. Howard van Til, physicist at Calvin College in Michigan has defended a Christian view of evolution as part of the creative process. Scientists and theologians connected with the Tyndale Fellowship in Cambridge, England, and the Christians in Science Group associated with the Victoria Institute in London have been in the forefront of dialogue between religion and science, more recently in their new journal, *Science and Christian Belief*. The issue urgently needs re-visiting by Christian theologians and scientists. Public perception is that the Process Theologians are today carrying the ball so far as a rationale for the creative process is concerned. Evangelicals have failed in this century to pick up adequately the question of Providence and how a rationale for creative change in nature (the *creatio continua*) can be formulated. Professor Paul Helm's recent book, *The Providence of God*, 1994, is an important step forward.
- 7.3.11 Evolution is concerned with secondary derivation, not original creation. While there may be severe disagreement between a naturalistic, mindless doctrine of evolution and a Christian doctrine of on-going change as an aspect of God's providence, it is illogical to deny the truth of evolutionary change to establish the doctrine of creation. This is because the true antithesis of evolution is spontaneous generation, and the correct antithesis of creation is materialism. The answer scientists now give for change in nature may be one form of evolution doctrine, but the final answer will be irrelevant to questions of creation or materialism. Creation and evolution are mutually independent concepts.
- 7.3.12 Criticisms of the philosophical elements of evolutionary theory concern two main issues:
- 7.3.13 First, the paradigmatic one. This is the built-in naturalistic, deterministic but also mindless and random-based assumption as to the origin of the universe and the nature of biological change.
- 7.3.14 Second, facticity. Do the facts warrant and bear out the theory? Or, does the paradigm skew perception of the data?
- 7.3.15 Some observations and criticisms bearing on these matters are: The claim to common ancestry, namely, that all living creatures are linked through descent with modification, and that random genetic change and natural selection are the mechanisms of the modification is called into question. But what the Christian alternative to this can be from the standpoint of a credible scientific hypothesis is not clear to me. Minute mutations are the primary mode of such changes, but at times equilibrium of the series is said to be punctuated by novel biological entrants with no discernible history - so called macroevolution. Is this so very different in principle from Christian claims to ictic creation as well as by means of providential process? Other areas of questioning concern the validity of vertebrate sequences; fossil variety and discontinuity, though the build-up of fossil evidence is immense; the significance of DNA evidence; and the key question of the origin of life. Naturalistic, deterministic evolution is being challenged because of the return of interest by scientists in falsification as a precursor to new insight. The issues raised are as much philosophical as they are questions of science. It is impossible to detach one from the other. Christians will have to do more thinking and less posturing, especially those, who like myself, know some theology but little science.

#### 7.4.0

#### **The Biblical Concept of Creation**

- 7.4.1 Fundamental differences between the Genesis account of the Creation and Eastern Creation Myths have been noted (7.0.10-11). Basic to the Genesis teaching is that God created the world *ex nihilo*, i.e., out of nothing. Now, "out of nothing" is an odd phrase but the intent is clear: unique activity to bring into existence that which did not before exist. There was no forming, eternally existent matter. Nor was the universe created out of a negative primal beginning (the *to me on* - chaos or darkness). It was created by divine fiat.
- 7.4.2 The linguistic foundation for this in *Genesis* is the Hebrew verb *bara*, whose derivation is obscure but whose meaning based upon use in the creation narrative is clear. Essentially the statement is about God, reinforced by the Kal Perfect form of *bara* and the Jussive, *God said*. The fundamental question *Genesis* addresses is why anything exists at all. Creation concerns not an abstract, detached First Cause; nor a Creator locked within the struggles of an evolving order which he hopes to lure forward; but the transcendent, personal God who *saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good* (*Genesis* 1:31).
- 7.4.3 While the use of *bara* appears to include on-going creative activity, as possibly in *Psalms* 104:30, the two aspects of creation, ictic and process, are correlated in the Scriptures. They are not independent concepts so far as God's creative activity is concerned. The use of *bara* here identifies activity unique to God; he is the subject of the act of creation; he alone creates. The object of *bara* (the accusative of the verb) is always the product, never the material out of which things are fashioned. It is an extraordinary act, not a common one, an act which is appropriate only to the creating activity of God.
- 7.4.4 Implications of the narrative are:
- 7.4.5 a) Only God is eternal, not matter. There is no Dualism in *Genesis*. Whether the matter spoken of in *Genesis* pre-existed the present form of the universe is not the issue because it too was the creation of God.
- 7.4.6 b) God stands over and above his world, he is not locked into it. He is transcendent (*Isaiah* 41:4; 48:12). Pantheism or Panentheism cannot be posited from the *Genesis* narrative. The world is not necessary to God's life; God is necessary to the world. This is the significance of,
- I, the Lord, the first,  
and with the last; I am He.*
- 7.4.7 c) Nevertheless, God acts in the world. The world is not independent of God. He is immanent in it.
- 7.4.8 d) Use of the word of God (*God said...*) as the energy of the creative act, which is by fiat, safeguards the conception of creation from emanation. The world is not an extension of the divine being (*Psalms* 33:9; note also *Isaiah* 45:12; 48:13 and *Psalms* 148:5-6,
- For he spoke, and it came to be,  
he commanded, and it stood forth.*
- 7.4.9 Passages which parallel the thought of the foregoing concepts include *Amos* 4:13; *Psalms* 90:1-2; 102:25-27; 104:1-4; *Isaiah* 42:5; 55:10-11.
- 7.4.10 In the New Testament, the vocabulary for creation is diverse.

7.4.11 The use of the *ktizo* group is synonymous with *bara*, the nominal form *ktistes* (Creator) being used of God (*1 Peter* 4:19, note also *Romans* 1:25 and *Colossians* 3:10). As well, the terms signify the act of creating (*Romans* 1:20; *2 Peter* 3:4); the totality of the creation (*Romans* 8:39-22; *Colossians* 1:15, 23; *Hebrews* 9:11); and, each creature or created thing (*Hebrews* 4:13, *Romans* 8:29).

7.4.12 The term *kosmos* identifies the creation as an ordered world, as a cosmos not a chaos (*Acts* 17:24); the inhabited earth (*Colossians* 2:20; *1 Timothy* 6:7); fallen humanity as alienated from God (*John* 7:7; 15:19; *1 John* 2:15); and, along with the foregoing, signifies worldly possessions and values (*1 John* 2:16).

7.4.13 The inhabited world in the sense of the community of humanity is identified by the term *oikoumene* (*Romans* 10:18; *Hebrews* 2:5; *Revelation* 3:10).

7.4.14 Finally, the universe in its temporal connotation is referred to by *aion*, translated age or era upon era. Very often its use parallels the use of *kosmos* when describing the world as evil and alienated from God (*Galatians* 1:4; *1 Corinthians* 2:6-8; *2 Corinthians* 4:4; *Ephesians* 6:12).

7.4.15 That creation in the New Testament is *ex nihilo* is clear. *Hebrews* 11:3 declares:

*By faith we understand  
that the world was created by the word of God,  
so that what is seen  
was made out of things which do not appear.*

Luke reports this doctrine as an assumption (*Acts* 4:24; 14:15; 17:24), as does Peter (*2 Peter* 3:4). Paul's language is dramatic: *from the foundation (casting down) of the world* (*Ephesians* 1:4). He explicitly says that God *gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist* (*Romans* 4:17).

7.4.16 Biblical teaching focuses not on the mode or time scale of creation, but on God's sovereignty and providence. He is the source of all things, including life. He is responsible for the kind of world he created - a world in which sin and evil could arise because of creaturely abuse of freedom. As Creator, God is wholly good and is our heavenly Father. His sovereignty in history will yet be shown through the establishment of his Kingly rule.

7.4.17 As God's handiwork, the Creation is not incidental to his purposes even though his central focus is on human beings whom he created in his own image. The Creation exists for ends greater than human existence and human relationships. It, too, is the object of redemption. In short, the Creation does not exist for exploitive human ends. There are laid upon human beings stewardship obligations in exchange for tenure. This does not mean that its resources are not to be extensively utilized and developed. Nevertheless, the Creation has its own intrinsic value in relation to God's purposes. Human beings are stewards of divinely given resources.

7.4.18 Only a fool is blind to the beauties and wonders of nature. Only a fool vandalizes nature. Anyone who has lain face down and put his nose among the blades of grass to observe the beauty and vigor of a single living blade as it reaches for the sky, or who has tried to photograph the grace of a flower, will have recognized and appreciated the artistry of the Creator. His trademark is stamped in every living thing. Hold Nature up to the light and the divine hologram will be clearly visible. As Paul discusses human spiritual opacity, he says (*Romans* 1:20):

*Ever since the creation of the world  
His invisible nature,*

*namely, his eternal power and deity,  
has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.  
So they are without excuse.*

7.4.19 Several matters have become troubling issues in the debate among Christians on how to interpret the Genesis narrative.

7.4.20 *Each according to its kind* (Genesis 1:11, 12, 21, 24) should be understood as *kinds*, that is, according to its various species. It is a collective form. Number and variety are in view, which may suggest creative possibilities. *Kinds* should not necessarily be identified with what modern biology means by species - itself an ambiguous term. The concept of fixity goes back to the botanists John Ray (1628-1705) and Carl von Linné (1707-1778) which has been read into orthodoxy. The emphasis in the text appears to be not to limit variation of types but the opposite. The Hebrew form allows the translation *in all its varieties*. The text declares that God said, "*Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds ... and it was so.*" God made, and God said let the earth bring forth; some by fiat, some by process.

7.4.21 *In which is their seed* (1:11) suggests continuous self-propagation which began by the divine word.

7.4.22 The "days" of creation have provoked vigorous debate. I take the view of the late R. K. Harrison that the phrase *morning and evening* is a Sumerian *merizmus*: a statement of opposites which encompasses a total period, or, from the greatest to the least, i.e., the total metaphysical situation. Hence the phrase indicates *from one end of the activity to the other*. They are days in the life and activities of God, not the human days about which the point is being made that there are six to work on and one to rest on.

#### 7.5.0 **The Form of the Creation**

7.5.1 If the universe is not self-sufficient, if God is responsible for the existence of everything, if God actively sustains the universe, if God has given to the world and to human beings relative independence, and if self-conscious, personal life is a primary goal of creation, then certain key issues have to be resolved in particular ways to reflect the form of such a creation.

7.5.2 1. The issue of **Perfection and Change**. As previously discussed, in the past doctrines of Being regarded the space-time world as unintelligible. To shield the perfection and impassibility of God or of the Good (note Plato and Aristotle) it was posited that the world came about either by spontaneous generation from primeval chaos, or that a host of intermediaries (Demiurges) de-linked God from direct contact with the changeable and changing universe. A lower-class deity is responsible for the changing universe, but not the impassible Absolute. This led to the notion of an immortal soul imprisoned in a hindering body all the while longing for release. The idea that matter is inherently evil invaded some Christian thought, wrongly identified, I think, with Paul's decrying of the flesh. The other alternative proposed a cyclical cosmos such that the process endlessly repeats itself but adds nothing to the fullness of the divine perfection.

7.5.3 To comment on the issue of perfection and change from a Christian perspective calls, first, for sharpening the issue:

7.5.4 a) If the world process is the whole of reality, then there is no criterion by which to judge that which is better or worse in it. It is simply a blind, meaningless surge of energy, as Bertrand Russell said. On this footing, is anything good or bad, and is evolution itself progress?

- 7.5.5                    b) If we postulate a transcendent, perfect Creator as the source and norm of things in space and time, as Christians do, then: if the process contributes to the enrichment of God's being, he was not perfect at all and we are back to (a) above; but if consummation of the space-time process can add nothing to God's perfection, is the process a meaningless waste of time?
- 7.5.6                    The issue boils down to the meaning for Christians of saying that this or that, or all things, work for the glory of God. If God is perfect, what contribution can there be to his glory?
- 7.5.7                    I have already hinted at some of the solutions which have been proposed. It may be helpful to list them more formally:
- 7.5.8                    a) **Appearance and Reality:** as in Platonism, Hinduism and most forms of Transcendental Idealism, that only that which is transcendental and intelligible is real.
- 7.5.9                    b) **Emanation:** as in the Neoplatonic systems, that the universe emanates or pours out from Absolute Being.
- 7.5.10                   c) **Intermediaries:** as in the Gnostic systems, that the divine principle is shielded from the changing universe by lower-level deities who are responsible for it.
- 7.5.11                   d) **Immanence:** as in ancient Panentheistic views and more recently in Process Theology, that the developing world is necessary to the final fulfillment of God's perfection (the perfections are then logically held as antinomies).
- 7.5.12                   e) **Creatio ex Nihilo:** as in Christian teaching, that God who is perfect and personal has nevertheless created a finite changing order of which he in his perfection and by his providence is Lord and that as part of this purpose he has limited the area of his freedom by ours.
- 7.5.13                   Of these all except the last either explain away elements of our experience, such as freedom, or hide the problem under a confusion of thought.
- 7.5.14                   The doctrine of creation does not posit a metaphysical system which, like heads and tails of a coin, is inclusive of both the space-time universe and the eternal, perfect God. Christianity makes the appeal, like the appeal Isaiah made, that we draw on an analogy between ourselves and the Creator to understand that the universe is grounded in personal, purposive activity, not in any necessity of being. This is the meaning of the will of God in Scripture. God calls the universe into being for some purpose of his own. Herein lies the significance of his being the Holy One: He is holy, high and separate. But he also is love. He wills to create free personal beings, and to conserve and redeem. The universe has a value in and of itself as the product of the will of the Creator.
- 7.5.15                   2. The issue of **Matter and Spirit.** Correct definition of spirit sees it to be a correlative of personal, purposive intention in creation.
- 7.5.16                   Distinguishing matter and spirit as different kinds of stuff is not helpful, if for no other reason than that modern physics now views matter dynamically. Extend that form of the distinction into the statement that spirit is not matter and one runs around in a circle. The negative distinction does not make a positive statement.
- 7.5.17                   In relation to living beings it is better to define the two in terms of activity. Matter is that which is acted upon. Spirit is that which, as Plato put it, is self-moved. The one is passive and impersonal - or tends to the non-personal; the other is active and personal. Purely random or behavioral activity is impersonal and material. Consciously willed actions are expressions of spirit. Hence personhood and spirit are synonyms. Spirit

is non-reducible personal reality. Spirit is selfhood. The attributes evident in the activity point to a reality, namely, the personal subject. The activity is not the core of the metaphysical reality; that reality is the self, the subject of the activity. We have thus made a positive statement while preserving the metaphysical distinction between matter and spirit.

7.5.18                    So far as we know, in this world spirit expresses itself by embodiment in matter. The goal for humans is not to escape bodily life, but to make it spiritual. That is, they are invited to make of life a mutually personal relationship with God and a mutually personal relationship with fellow human beings. Matter and determinism are correlates, as are personhood and freedom.

7.5.19                    3. The issue of **Contingency and Freedom**. In the nature of the case, to be personal is to be free. In practice this means more or less free. Freedom is the capacity to make conscious decisions which have outcomes. The outcome depends upon a prior conscious decision which might have gone this way or that. It was not predetermined by factors which mythologize the autonomy of the conscious decision.

7.5.20                    Materialist and Idealist systems eschew freedom. They are inherently deterministic. The doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo* accepts the creation for what it is, which includes freedom of choice as a real factor of personal, conscious experience.

7.5.21                    Christians are among those who perceive two modes of control in the created order: Causal sequence (which somehow must take account of Indeterminacy, Quantum Mechanics and Chaos Theory) which is to us fundamentally impersonal and opaque; and, purposive intention which operates within the reality of contingency as a fundamental factor in the universe as we know it. We are inside such an event. It is not opaque to us. By emphasizing purposive intention the doctrine of creation can account for but not necessarily explain disparate elements of our experience.

7.5.22                    Definition of spirit moves on a vertical scale of values. One can be more or less spiritual, more or less purely behaviorally conditioned. A human being develops from a behaviorally conditioned infant to full personhood. This is growth of spirit - growth from the level of behavioral responses to self-consciousness and freedom. Life lived as a set of behavioral responses is unfreedom, though behavioral responses may be used constantly to increase freedom. The irony of B. F. Skinner's Behaviorism to deny freedom is that this axiom of Behaviorism applies universally except to the behaviorist speaker.

7.5.23                    There is also, finally, the more common understanding of freedom, namely, the sense of freedom beyond the power to choose as when metaphysically spirit is contrasted with matter, to freedom as the power of a spiritual being to achieve purpose, where spiritual freedom stands in contrast to spiritual slavery. Spirit equals personhood equals freedom.

7.5.24                    The reality of spirit and freedom confirm the reality of contingency in our world, of which they form a part, and validate our confidence in a scientifically dependable world. Increase of control, including moral self-control, marks also an increase of freedom. The whole earth will be filled with the glory of God when freedom is exercised according to the will of God. That this kind of freedom should exist within a universe in which contingency is neither an illusion nor irrational is testimony to grace as key feature in the mode of the relations between God and the world.

## 7.6.0                    **The Creation of Human Beings**

7.6.1                    There is a curious anecdote reported by historians of Evolution Theory in the late nineteenth century. A half-century before Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859), the French naturalist John-Baptiste de Lamarck (1744-1829) proposed evolution as a serious

scientific concept, which many who also firmly believed in a Creator began to consider favorably. The collision between those who accepted the doctrine of Creation and those who espoused evolution following Darwin came about because natural selection was credited as the mechanism of biological change. While the concept of natural selection is attributed to Darwin, Alfred Russell Wallace is acknowledged as a co-discoverer, and some assign chronological priority to Wallace so far as publication of the concept is concerned. Nevertheless, Darwin's book became the catalyst for widespread acceptance of evolution and the theoretical base of the concept. In succeeding years Darwin (d.1882) turned away from interest in natural selection and became interested in Lamarck's theory of inherited characteristics, while Wallace continued to advocate natural selection. Eventually Wallace rejected natural selection for human origins and concluded that human beings could have arisen only through the intervention of a "Higher Intelligence." This tension is representative: can a naturalistic explanation account for human uniqueness? The issue and resulting tensions remain to the present day.

7.6.2 It is biblical to link human nature with both animals and God, i.e., with animals by way of organic features (the Hebrew *nephesh*) and with God by way of spiritual nature (Hebrew *Ruach*). This comment by the Christian anthropologist G. E. Barnes ("Some Reflections on the Evolution Controversy," *Faith and Thought*, 91.2-3, 1959) on dual linkage of human nature sums up the dilemma of modern Christians as well as opportunity for understanding. Barnes adds that the Bible affirms human continuity with the dust of the earth (*Genesis* 2:7; 3:19; *Job* 34:15; *Psalms* 103:14; *Ecclesiastes* 12:7). The Bible also affirms human uniqueness, which is that humans are created in the image of God (*Genesis* 1:26-27; 2:7). The challenge for Christian understanding is how to combine biological continuity with spiritual uniqueness.

7.6.3 Powers of persuasion are at least as important in recent proposals about human origins as is strength of evidence. The following sums up my understanding of recent finds and theory as to the significance of the fossil and genetic record:

7.6.4 a) Hominids, the zoological family of mankind is broadly inclusive of many genera, going back as early as 5 million years before the present. Among these is the genus *Homo* dating from about 2 million years ago. Modern humans, *Homo Sapiens*, date from about 150,000 years ago. The Christian missionary-anthropologist, William J. Kornfield lists extensive data from his own research in South America in his rejoinder to the "Late-Date Genesis Man" theory (*Christianity Today*, June 8, 1973).

7.6.5 b) Fossil records in considerable numbers show changes in skeletal morphology in Hominid groups. *Homo Erectus* - Java, China, Asia, Africa, Europe - is dated 1,000,000 to 300,000 years ago and is regarded by some as a sub-species of *Homo Sapiens*. *Homo Habilis*, i.e., "Handy Man" - Kenya - probably disappeared from Africa 1.75 million years ago. *Neanderthal Man* is regarded as a stage between *Homo Erectus* and modern humans with possible inter-breeding between *Neanderthal Man* and *Homo Sapiens*. Did *Neanderthal Man* become extinct because they could not adapt? Did they merge with human populations? *Homo Sapiens* - at least anatomically - existed from about 150,000 years ago, though striking evidence as to his activities dates from about 40,000 years ago.

7.6.6 c) Civilization among the *Homo* group is progressive. Stone tools were in use 2.5 million years ago, however toolmaking and use do not by themselves prove the presence of distinctive human characteristics. Control of fire dates from 1.3 million to 700,000 years ago. Rock art dates from 40,000 to 30,000 years ago.

7.6.7 d) It is cultural not morphological differences which attest to human uniqueness.

7.6.8 e) Language (which does not leave fossil remains!) appears to many to be a uniquely human characteristic. Most researchers concede that chimps can acquire

rudiments of language as conditioned responses but that they do not speak for speaking's sake to communicate. For example, Noam Chomsky holds language to be a human species-specific capacity. Size of brain in hominids is not a guarantee of the presence of human intelligence.

7.6.9 f) Molecular biology (the DNA sequences) is throwing new light on primate and human development. The time span for the divergence of the human line from African apes has been compressed from ten million to between four and five million years ago. It is now believed by some DNA researchers that the entire human population as we know it descended from a common African ancestor about 100,000 years ago, possibly from a single pair.

7.6.10 One can be dismissive of the problems posed for Christians in light of scientific claims. It is unwise to do so. Death by a thousand qualifications of the issues is not good enough, even though some qualifications may be relevant, such as: That the Bible does not teach science but reveals spiritual truth which apart from revelation is unascertainable. That scientific descriptions will in the nature of the case differ from theological ones just as a technical paper differs from a TV journalist's report, yet both convey central points. That the Bible records only a few salient events which encompass aeons of time and that these are chosen not for their scientific detail but to state a few strategic truths. That in the end *Genesis* is concerned with human relations with God and interpersonal human relations not science. All of these qualifications are useful. Nevertheless, the line drawn between naturalistic evolution and the creationist view is distinct. Correlation of geological data and the creation narrative does not, to my mind, succeed; and, research into primate history and its relevance to human biological development continues to be a serious intellectual challenge to Christians. I place two limits on evolution theorizing: First, there is a supreme Creator, the personal God. Second, humans are spiritual beings as well as part of animal creation. Evolution by Natural Selection, it seems to me, cannot account for creation and it has been unsuccessful in accounting for key elements of human nature.

7.6.11 Have anthropological theories been able to throw light on the origin of human beings, *Homo Sapiens*, as we know them? I remain unconvinced, in part because I believe that naturalistic evolution theories tend to ignore or to trivialize essential human characteristics. I admit that Christians have too long ignored the organismic similarities between humans and the animal kingdom, and the fossil record. Nevertheless, there has been more willingness on their part to correct this than there has been on the part of naturalism-category driven theories of human nature which fail to come to grips with the uniqueness of human nature or trivialize unique elements by reduction.

7.6.12 Naturalistic evolution cannot account for spiritual qualities which, to my mind, point to the reality of a spiritual nature. This includes self-consciousness, the capacity to be governed by moral standards and ethical ideals, awareness of the core of those standards, namely "good" and the non-reducible distinction between right and wrong; the demands of truth; understanding of and response to beauty; and all that follows from these in respect of the realities of freedom and moral responsibility.

7.6.13 Consider for example that naturalistic and behavioral explanations of altruism simply trivialize it. Are all altruistic acts done because they "make you feel good," or, is true altruism the capacity of a moral being to sacrifice what a person has or, indeed, one's very existence, on behalf of another? Naturalistic evolution cannot account for love. Need-satisfaction and stimulus-response psychological theories based upon it are rationalizations which miss the central core of what true love is, as modern devotees of the dictum "if it feels good, do it" have found to their frustration and sorrow. At bottom, naturalistic evolution is incompatible with Christian faith.

- 7.6.14                    Following Socrates, Plato idealized the dictum "Virtue is knowledge, vice is ignorance," to signify that if one knew the good one would do the good. The human problem is that what we know depends upon what we are. Response to truth is never a purely intellectual transaction. It has a deeply moral quotient. Why do human beings who know the good they ought to do nevertheless choose to do evil? Paul mourns his condition in *Romans 7*. What science cannot study may be pointing us to the conclusion that humans have not evolved by wholly natural means. If morality, truth, goodness, beauty, responsibility are real but lie outside science, then Darwinism as science (not as philosophy) can never give a complete, or even adequate, account of human nature.
- 7.6.15                    Like all Christians, I am a Creationist, but not a Special Creationist, that is, those who believe that the time-span of creation is restricted to the past few thousand years (now known as Creationism). I believe *Genesis 1:1 - 2:3* to be history in elegant story form. It is in semi-poetic style which is in contrast to the prose narrative which follows from 2:4. It is structured to highlight the family history of creation, just like the family histories in the succeeding chapters beginning at 2:4, which are divided by the same introductory formula. The section 1:1 - 2:3 declares that God made both humans and animals from the dust of the earth. If Adam and Eve were actual persons, as I believe they were, what options am I left with?
- 7.6.16                    First, that the creation of humans by God was ictic - completely *de novo* - at a point in time, body, soul and spirit. This is a nice comfort zone for faith. It may, however, constitute an offense to the marvels and complexities of the creation as God's handiwork.
- 7.6.17                    Second, that through biological development following cladistic distances in the phylogenetic tree there emerged *Homo Sapiens* who became fully human, either through a providential development process from which emerged the human spirit or, as I prefer to think, when God breathed into his nostrils the *breath of lives*, thus making spiritual beings of this line in the pattern of God's own image. This would allow for the commonality of human and animal organismic features under providential, on-going creative development, and for human spiritual uniqueness as the result of God's initiative in history to relate this creature to himself in a special way. Thus body and soul relate humans to the animal kingdom and spirit is God's image which makes mutual personal communion possible.
- 7.6.18                    The biblical terminology affirms both biological continuity between humans and the animal kingdom and the spiritual uniqueness of human beings. The following (7.6.15-19) is drawn from my essay "On the Nature of Man," *Faith and Thought*, 92.2, Winter 1968:
- 7.6.19                    Given the divine origin of human beings, what is human nature in biblical understanding? The Hebrew word *Nephesh* has a wide variety of physical and psychical connotations including throat, breath, sensation, emotion, desire, and even a dead body. Primarily it denotes "life-principle" (*Leviticus 17:14*) but can also denote all living creatures (*naphshim*, note *Genesis 1:24, 30*). *Nephesh* is the inner vital principle of the body and the body is the outward aspect of *nephesh*; (*Deuteronomy 12:23; Isaiah 10:18*). While *nephesh* is predicable of both humans and animals, in regard to humans it also designates the person as a center of self-conscious life, or as a living being. At creation Adam became a living being, a living person, or a distinct spiritual reality (*Genesis 2:7*; note *Job 16:4; Isaiah 1:14*).
- 7.6.20                    The term *ruach* (breath, wind, air) means spirit or breath of life (*Genesis 6:17, 7:15*). It denotes the energy or power of conscious life. *Neshamah*, the noun which corresponds to *nephesh*, and *ruach* occur together in *Genesis 7:22*, *all in whose nostrils was the neshamah of the ruach of life*. *Ruach* is used over the entire range of human and divine powers, including the personal influence of Yahweh's Spirit and the human

person, whether of his intellectual, emotional, or volitional life, or of any one of these as representative of the entire person. Through these powers the vital, purposeful individual is known.

7.6.21 Thus seen, human beings are self-conscious spiritual realities. Spirit as a constituent element of personality occurs in *Job* 32:8, *1 Samuel* 16:14, and *Psalms* 104:4. The Hebrew term *basar* identifies the flesh, and its equivalent in Greek is *sarx*. Many parts of the body are commonly used as representative of the whole, but these are primarily the face, hand, reins, and heart. The body and its parts are instruments of the self, denoted by the Hebrew and Greek pronouns 'ni, 'noki, and *ego*.

7.6.22 In both the Old and New Testament the heart is uniquely the center of self-conscious life and psychical activity (note *Psalms* 51; *Romans* 10:9-10) and is therefore equivalent to the mind or self. In Greek the immaterial part of human nature is the *psyche* (soul) and the *pneuma* (spirit). Whether these are synonyms or two distinguishable yet vitally related aspects of the person continues to be vigorously debated. The biblical terms are nowadays usually understood to denote aspects of a unified bodily life through which human beings are aware of themselves, their environment and God. The uniqueness of the human spirit centers upon its being created in the image (*tselem*) and likeness (*demuth*) of God. Both terms occur in *Genesis* 1:26 and 5:3, *tselem* in 9:6 and *demuth* in 5:1.

7.6.23 Other data include: In *2 Corinthians* 4:16 Paul speaks of our outer and inner nature; in *Romans* 7:22 of the inmost self and in *Ephesians* 3:16 of the inner man. He also speaks of the natural and spiritual man (*1 Corinthians* 2:14), of the fleshly tablets of the heart (*2 Corinthians* 3:3) and of fleshly impulses (*Romans* 7:14; *1 Corinthians* 3:1; *2 Corinthians* 1:12). *Jude* also speaks of worldly ones devoid of the spirit (v.19).

7.6.24 These days we are urged to think of human nature as a psycho-physical whole, although what that wholeness means apart from monism is uncertain if the distinctiveness of spirit is to be maintained. That "man is one" does not seem to make any sense. One what? Of what is the one comprised metaphysically? Part of modern uncertainty in biblical theology as to how to speak of human nature derives from fear that we may intrude modern notions of personality into ancient patterns of thought. However, fear of doing this may be preventing us from seeing that ancient people thought of themselves as being individually personal much more fully than we have supposed. In this respect, insufficient attention has been paid to the functions of the personal pronouns in the biblical texts.

7.6.25 Two inferences may be drawn from the biblical data:

7.6.26 First, each human created in the image of God is a personal being who enjoys a self-conscious existence and is capable of purposeful action. This is not inconsistent with Boethius' (d. 525 C.E.) definition of *persona* as "an individual substance of a rational nature," (*naturae rationalibus individua substantia*). I think he means a self-conscious, rational personal reality.

7.6.27 Second, the spiritual reality of the self seems to imply a psychical realm which includes God and spirits and which transcends the physical realm. The human parallel concerns the duality of mind and brain. Any consideration of human nature as comprising a psycho-physical whole must, I think, take into account the duality of spirit and body.

7.6.28 God is Creator of body and mind and he has sanctified both. The doctrine of the resurrection shows what value is placed by the Christian faith upon the body. The doctrine of the Christian life corroborates this truth because the bodily life of each person is the material out of which the spiritual life is built. The Christian view of human beings

is that they do not aim to be free of the body either in the present or ultimately, but that there should be a daily self-offering of the whole person to God and that there will be final redemption of body and spirit together.

## 7.7.0                    **The Image of God**

7.7.1                    In *Colossians* 3:10 Paul says that the acquired new nature in Christ *is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator*. In this passage Paul not only gives the gist of the creation narrative's core idea, he as well states its essence. Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (*Genesis* 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6, note also 5:3). To define the image of God one must go beyond describing functions to the metaphysical reality. That the image of God is bound up with what is meant by the spiritual nature of human beings appears to me to be self-evident in light of previous discussion as to the nature of spirit (7:5.15-18). The image of God is both a reality and an ideal toward which a process of redeemed development moves (*is being renewed*).

7.7.2                    The linguistic equivalents for image and likeness in Hebrew, Greek and Latin are: *selem* and *demuth*, *eikon* and *homoiosis*, *imago* and *similitudo*. I take image and likeness to be parallels. In any event, likeness in the nature of the case must be understood to reflect image even if because of sin distorted likeness reflects the injured image.

7.7.3                    The most common proposals for definitions of the image of God are:

7.7.4                    a) From ancient times reason has been the most widely accepted definition: that the human rational constitution is the divine image. I hold that reason is indeed a core element of the image but that something more needs to be said.

7.7.5                    b) That the male-female relationship jointly signifying the meaning of 'Adam' or 'man,' as Karl Barth has proposed, is the definition of the image of God. In this the plural *let us make man in our image* is said to encompass male and female in the term 'man' within the relational implications of 'our.' Relationship is the image. I hold that relationship is a function of the metaphysical reality which is capable of relating and that this reality is endowed with the image of God.

7.7.6                    c) That the image is dominion. *Genesis* 1:26 says that in proposing the creation of human beings in his own image God said *and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea ... birds ... cattle ... and over every creeping thing*. In other words, the image is lordship combined with stewardship as a reflection of God's own lordship. I hold that lordship and stewardship are functions of the reality which is the image, but that the image itself is something else.

7.7.7                    d) Other definitions focus upon the moral nature of human beings. In this, moral resemblance to God who is holy is taken to be the image. Or, as proposed by Emil Brunner, responsibility in interpersonal relations (the "our" image of the narrative) such that we reflect capacity to act from love, in love, for love. The image is ethical duty reflected in the command to tend the garden of Eden. Again, I agree that the moral aspect of human nature is generic to the meaning of the image of God, but hold that this quality is a description (moral nature) and function (ethical obligation) of the inner reality.

7.7.8                    I propose a four-fold definition of the image of God: that a human being is a self, an intelligent self, a valuing self, and a purposing self, within the context of a bodily life.

7.7.9                    a) First, **personhood** is the image of God. Selfhood, spirit, personhood, mind, self-consciousness, self-identity, self-ascription are synonyms. To be personal is to be a self which the pronoun "I" expresses as a commonplace of language. It would be wrong

to make the commonplace incomprehensible. I take the self to be a non-reducible reality which we know ourselves and other selves to be by an immediate intuition. A person is not simply a unity of conscious experiences but is the subject of that unity. Leonard Hodgson expressed this truth as follows: a person is the subject of experiences mediated through a particular body in space and time. He or she is a spiritual agent. The self is in the physical world but may not be reduced to any description of it, including functions of the brain and the body. While many facts about the operation of the central nervous system are now known, we are no closer to being able to give a scientific account of self-conscious life. Attempts to explain mind in terms of physical properties sidestep the reality of self-consciousness itself.

7.7.10                   The literature on this subject during the past forty years is vast. It is highlighted by debates on the relation of mind to physical brain. Is mind an epiphenomenon, merely a computational function of physical brain as has been powerfully advocated (for example, Peter Unger, *Identity, Consciousness and Value*, 1991, and Francis Crick, among many)? For Crick, what we mean by the self is the integration of representations across spatially distributed networks - a unity in apperception. By consciousness Crick means a series of operations in a neuronal web and no more.

7.7.11                   Many voices have been raised against the neurobiological mechanistic or physicalist view of human nature ("you are the neurons") in favor of postulating an agent other than the mechanism itself, i.e., the mind as interactive agent. Note work which addressed earlier debate especially the published papers of an international symposium on the topic held in 1968, *Beyond Reductionism*, edited by Arthur Koestler and J. R. Smythies, and the joint efforts of Karl Popper and J. C. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain*, 1977. More recent theories which deny reduction even if the concept of the mind as a spiritual entity is not accepted include the work of Roger Penrose, *Shadows of the Mind*, 1994; John Searle, *The Re-Discovery of the Mind*, 1992; and others such as Jerry Fodor and David Hodgson. Hodgson advocates a dual-aspect monism.

7.7.12                   A difficulty in the "you are the neurons" point of view is how the insertion of personal pronouns in conversation is to be understood. The intrusion is not simply verbal, it is logical. What is the meaning of saying "I," or "me?" For example, W. Russell Brain, the British neurologist and a physicalist, in the course of his discussion says, *what I have just been giving you is a scientific account of what goes on in the nervous system when we perceive something (Human Knowledge. Its Scope and Limits, 1948, p. 8)*. Similarly, more recently Patricia Smith defends the physicalist view (*Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, 67.4, January 1994, p. 31*) in the course of which she comments, *If I am right, and certain patterns of brain activity are the reality behind the experience, this fact does not in and of itself change my experience and suddenly allow me (my brain) to view my brain as an MR scanner or a neurosurgeon might view it. I shall continue to have experiences in the regular old way, though in order to understand the neuronal reality of them, my brain needs to have lots of experiences and undergo lots of training*. I do not think that we can ever escape from the reality of the self or the ego as a primary datum of experience.

7.7.13                   The self cannot be observed in the way in which ordinary phenomena are observed and measured. The mind is a private world but it is nonetheless one which can be made public by the agent himself or herself. It is the public character of the agent's self-ascription which gives to the self its empirical status and which demands for itself recognition as a fact of experience. The self furnishes its own empirical criteria which are a part of its being truly known.

7.7.14                   The unity of the self is made up in part by memory-linkage of its conscious states and by the preservation of the continuity of that awareness through a lifetime, which includes spanning periods of unconsciousness due to sleep, anesthesia, and other causes. This is a problem for physicalists. A. J. Ayer, in a philosophical discussion of the

issue in the early years of the modern debate, said that the personal subject is *literally identical with that to which we also attribute physical properties. If we ask what this subject is, the only correct answer is just that it is a person.* He admits that no solution has yet been found to the problem of how discrete experiences which are separated in time are nevertheless the experiences of the same self. The logical difficulties one faces when attempts are made to avoid acknowledging the reality of the discrete self may be illustrated from his language in the following, "these particular experiences can then be identified as the experiences *of* the person *whose* body it is," (Italics mine. *The Concept of the Person*, 1963, pp. 85-86, 113-114, 117). In Montreal, Wilder Penfield's experiments produced the odd spectacle of a patient struggling upon command to control an arm which was moving following artificial stimulation of areas of the brain. Penfield adds, *Is there another mechanism or is there in the mind something of different essence? ... To declare that these two things are one does not make them so. But it does block the progress of research (Control of the Mind, 1961).*

- 7.7.15 Paul's allusion to the image of God suggests a dynamic conception of the self. We experience relations which are to varying degrees personal, and some are impersonal. For Christians the manifestation of the image of God in fullness is seen in Jesus Christ. Irenaeus presented Christology as *anakephalaïosis*, the recapitulation in the race of normative humanity. Christ's human nature represents the divine image into which likeness redeemed human beings can grow. His humanity is original, historically actual, normative and, through the Holy Spirit, effectual redemptively.
- 7.7.16 b) Second, the self is a **rational self**. To say that intelligence is the crown of human nature is not to deify reason. Rationalism is not the end product of reason in the biblical understanding of human nature; nevertheless, everywhere in Scripture the appeal is to intelligent, rational beings. Paul's attack on the wisdom of the world in the first two chapters of *1 Corinthians* is not an attack upon intelligence but upon misuse of reason.
- 7.7.17 Intelligence is the power of rational thought, which transcends mere behavioral responses. It is our ability to reason to conclusions from evidence. It includes creative, intuitive imagination. It involves capacity for free-ranging observation of one's own life and the world around us. It includes exploration, observation, noting and taking account of what is around us in a coherent way. Reason is often guided by a flash of inspiration which follows from only a hunch or an esthetic sense of simplicity, beauty or harmony.
- 7.7.18 Reasoning entails morality. Response to truth is as much a moral commitment as it is a rational insight.
- 7.7.19 c) Third, the self is a **valuing self**. As spiritual beings we share a common sense of right and wrong and a common sense that it is always better to do right than to do wrong. This moral sense responds to the moral law which is identified ethically in Platonic theory as The Good, and described in Scripture as the righteousness of God. We are fashioned in such a manner as not merely to respond to stimuli nor merely to be governed by mores, but by an unconditional standard of value; by what ought to be the case, or by what we ought to do.
- 7.7.20 The experience of unconditional moral obligation is uniquely human. If it is real (and I believe that it is) then like anything else that is real, it cannot be proved. It is apprehended as an immediate datum of experience.
- 7.7.21 Unquestionably humans are creatures of habit, easily conditioned into patterns of behavior; nevertheless, morality is more than mores, and human responses in moral situations reflect awareness of an objective standard of righteousness, of right and wrong, which transcends mores.

7.7.22 That human beings are moral selves goes beyond questions of behavior, moral rectitude and justice. Included is the capacity for commitment to high spiritual, and esthetic ideals and deep altruistic self-giving.

7.7.23 d) Fourth, the self is a **purposing self**. The image of God entails the capability for conscious, free, purposeful actions which are guided by high ideals.

7.7.24 While in physics the concept of Indeterminacy has opened new understanding, behaviorists refuse to allow for contingency and freedom as real aspects of the world and of human experience. There is no scientific basis for denying the freedom of the will.

7.7.25 Personal life which is spiritually qualified has a capacity for purposeful, creative activity. Persons can choose to act with increasing freedom or choose to act in ways that increase habituation and therefore limit freedom of action, for example drug addiction. Conversely, habituation can serve freedom creatively, as in the skill of a concert pianist. Nevertheless, the higher the spirituality of personal life the less causally predictable are its choices (except in their moral quality) because as the spirituality of life increases its choices refer less to the antecedents of action and more to moral, esthetic and creative goals in relation to which decisions must be taken. Creativity is a mark of the image of God.

7.7.26 The image of God defines the essential nature of human beings. In view are the Creator's ends to create free, good persons who would become co-workers with himself. Spirit equals personhood equals the image of God.

## 7.8.0 **The Origin of the Soul**

7.8.1 In modern times, two factors bedevil theological discussion of the origin of the soul.

7.8.2 The first is that differing views on the subject do not break along traditional denominational fault lines. This has stimulated heated discussion within as well as among denominational traditions. As a result, more attention has focused on the topic than is its due with little to show for the trouble.

7.8.3 Second, in relation to this question theologians have paid too little attention to the nature/nurture issue in modern psychology. The correlate in psychology to the origin of the soul in theology is, for example, whether human traits are mostly inherited or mostly socially formed. That question has received considerable attention in studies of twins who were raised separately but give evidence of common psychological traits.

7.8.4 Origen advocated the doctrine of the soul's **pre-existence** and its natural immortality, following Plato in the *Phaedo*. It is a distinct spiritual component in humans not found in other creatures. It is a rational reality which survives the body, not the life-principle or life-blood of the body which was common belief in Origen's time. God created the spiritual world of a fixed number of souls before he created the material world. Embodiment was punishment for the Fall. Pre-existence seemed to mute the problem of survival and a limited number of souls seemed to blunt the edge of the problem of a theoretically infinite number of souls. The "re-use" of souls in the sense of transmigration or reincarnation raised enormous problems for Christians, especially with regard to moral responsibility and final judgment.

7.8.5 As in Plato's *Symposium*, for Origen the soul is pulled by love to attain its object, symbolized in the wedding theme of the *Song of Solomon*. God the Creator is love. The pre-existent soul, locked in the carnal body, longs for re-direction of its power to its source. Origen spiritualized the sexual overtones of the Platonic *eros* with the non-sexual term *agape* as dispassionate love. While for Origen the body represents restorative

punishment, its future is not clear. After death the soul is given a spiritual body in place of the discarded physical body. This put Origen into conflict with received ideas as to the resurrection of the physical body.

7.8.6 Pre-existence tends to belittle the body in which the soul is resident. While soul is properly defined biblically as the animating life-principle of the body, and therefore is used of animals, commonly it is used as well for spirit, which identifies the unique human personal identity and reality. Thus ambiguities in usage need not obscure the core issue which is whether to view the two sides of human nature as dual-sided monism or, as I do, along lines of some kind of interactionist theory.

7.8.7 **Individual Creation of the soul** is the official view of the Roman Catholic Church, which was re-affirmed in the encyclical *Humani Generis*, 1950, and of segments of Calvinist Theology in Europe and the United Kingdom. In America, acceptance of this viewpoint has diminished in Reformed thought and is largely rejected among most other evangelicals.

7.8.8 Creationism is the view that God individually creates or implants the soul of each individual at some point between conception and birth. This is claimed to more readily conserve individuality, to more readily account for the soul's immortality, and to more readily account for Christ's sinless birth. Four passages are commonly cited as biblical warrant for the doctrine: *Genesis* 12:7, that God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, *and man became a living being*; *Ecclesiastes* 10:7, that upon death *the spirit returns to God who gave it*; *Zechariah* 12:1, that God *formed the spirit of man within him*; and, *Hebrews* 12:9, where God is called *the Father of spirits*.

7.8.9 The central motif of creation view of the origin of the soul is complete dependence upon the Creator for every individual life in contrast to the deism alleged to lurk in the view of genetic reproduction of the entire person in a continuous line from Adam to the present (Traducianism).

7.8.10 Objections to the creation view of the origin of the soul include:

7.8.11 First, that there is postulated an unbridgeable dichotomy between soul and body. This charge is consistent with the neo-monism of the "man is one" hypothesis of recent biblical theology which warns against slighting the divine intention of creating a providentially supervised self-reproducing process in nature.

7.8.12 Second, in creationist theory there remains the intractable problem of how to account for inherited psychological characteristics and the transmission of original sin. Attempts to correct creationism, as E. L. Mascall has done, have sought to generalize God's creating activity, unspecific to each individual, but this borders on the Traducian view. On the other hand, the Traducians are hard pressed to defend themselves against deism or, at the least, mechanism. Creationism has built into it the separate origin of the soul. This may be the truth of the matter, even though I think not; however, a stronger case needs to be made for it in relation to the nature of the creative process, the question of inherited psychological characteristics, and the question of the transmission of original sin.

7.8.13 The **traducianist** view is associated with the name of Tertullian (c.160 - c.220). The term derives from the Latin word *tradux*, meaning "offshoot" or "branch." On this view, God created humanity with the capacity to reproduce complete human beings, body, soul and spirit, without special divine intervention in each birth. The Creator is reflected in the creative process and in his image in each human being. It is worthwhile to quote Tertullian's elegant formulation as he comments on the place of both body and soul in the reproductive process (*A Treatise on the Soul*, 27, translation by S. Thelwall in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, volume 3). Note the care with which Tertullian establishes his

fundamental concept from the creation narrative where it is said that each created entity bears within itself the reproductive seed of its own kind:

7.8.14 *Foreasmuch, therefore, as these two different and separate substances, the clay and the breath, combined at the first creation in forming the individual man, they then both amalgamated and mixed their proper seminal rudiments in one, and ever afterwards communicated to the human race the normal mode of its propagation, so that even now the two substances, although diverse from each other, flow forth simultaneously in a united channel; and finding their way together into their appointed seed-plot, they fertilize with their combined vigour the human fruit out of their respective natures. And inherent in this human product is his own seed, according to the process which has been ordained for every creature endowed with the functions of generation. Accordingly from the one (primeval) man comes the entire outflow and redundance of men's souls - nature proving herself true to the commandment of God, "Be fruitful, and multiply."*

7.8.15 Traducianists claim that in the *Genesis* narrative Eve is made a whole person from Adam (2:21-25, *1 Corinthians* 11:8); that Abraham's children existed in the loins of Abraham (*1 Corinthians* 7:9-10; and that in *Genesis* 2:2 God ended his work of creating so that there follows reproduction not *creatio ex nihilo* as the manner in which the soul originates. Not very strong stuff, even if I favor the Traducian view! The strongest case for the Traducian view is re-affirmation by it of the continuity of the providentially supervised creative process as the rationale for the transmission of inherited psychological characteristics and original sin. Tertullian does this more convincingly than modern statements of the Traducian perspective.

7.8.16 If the creationist view deifies the soul at the expense of the body, does the Traducianist view secularize humanity and materialize the soul? The truth is that nowhere in the Scriptures is the origin of the soul specifically discussed. Duality is implicit in the ways we think of human nature. I tend to side with the Traducianist view that God has built full reproductive rights into human nature, body, soul and spirit, and that this answers best to the demand that we recognize the solidaric life of the human race morally as well as biologically.

## 7.9.0 **The Fall**

7.9.1 Nothing is more offensive to the post-Enlightenment modern mind than the concept of the Fall. The ideological core of modern thought is that through evolution and social development human beings are climbing out from a state of predation in nature to become fully rational human beings who can, if they will, form benign societies which ensure peace and security, and foster personal self-fulfillment. The idea of a pristine start to the Creation, then an historical Fall is held to be naive at best and the idea of native human corruption and on-going propensity to evil abhorrent.

7.9.2 Those who as Christians are disinclined to accept an historical Fall take refuge in symbol in one or both of two ways, though in each case the key idea is to make of the Fall a statement of a condition not the genesis of the condition. Along with the view of the Fall as historical there are thus three major interpretations of the Fall:

7.9.3 First, that the Fall states "the truth about every person." The Fall represents recurrent events in an on-going condition, as suggested in the parallel metaphor in *1 Corinthians* 10:12. This existential interpretation argues that the Fall is contemporary to each individual human being. The concept is seen to be individually psychologically insightful. It symbolizes responsibility for one's own life and failure to live up to that responsibility. It is in the existential moment of anxiety, guilt, despair shaped by the absurdities of life that the call for faith, hope and love is most readily heard. Thus the Fall is individually propaedeutic to the reception of grace. It is not the historical record of

how sin and evil entered the world. The Fall registers the reality of inauthentic existence which ought to impel toward authentic existence.

7.9.4               Second, that the Fall states "the truth about the human race." It symbolizes the paradox of human existence: the racial condition of sin, including cruelty, violence, prejudice and all other forms of injustice. The Fall is descriptive of a condition needing a cure. It is not the historical root of the condition. Rather, it affirms that the root of the human condition is human independence from God and misguided self-sufficiency which is contemporary with each generation of humanity. The Fall is representative of the universal human malaise.

7.9.5               Third, that the historical Fall states the truth about how sin originated, that evil in nature is a derivative of sin, and that death is due to sin. The Fall is related to the realities of contingency and freedom in the world, it relates the origin of sin and evil to a moral not a non-moral cause, and it furnishes a rationale for the on-going universal human predicament in, and propensity to, sin.

7.9.6               The problem of evil has its sharpest and most uncomfortable edge within the implicates of the doctrine of Creation. Evil is not a co-eternal principle with good (no ultimate dualism). Evil cannot be defined as unreality or non-being. Evil cannot be reduced to good, or redefined as good, in some super-coherent infinite divine rationality or being. Evil is not the fault of a sub-deity, a demiurge, to shield the absolute from involvement. Evil is not a necessary, native cosmic condition against which God himself struggles and against which he invites us to struggle along with him. Evil is not a myth about non-being from which humans emerge in the struggle to achieve full self-consciousness or authentic existence. In Christian teaching the origin of evil is related to a bad will. It has an ethical base.

7.9.7               If God is good and is the Creator of the world, whence evil? The biblical answer is: It is a standing truth for Christians that evil has originated within creation through creaturely rebellion permitted by God. This is the meaning of the Fall. In Calvin's words, God did not create the world *ambiguo fine*, i.e., not knowing the ends of his actions. He created a world in which evil intrudes through a moral default. He did not create a creature who must fall but who could fall, knowing, as it were, that he had within himself the resources to deal redemptively with creaturely rebellion.

7.9.8               Whether the Fall of Adam and Eve was preceded by a pre-mundane Fall of Satan and angelic beings is immaterial to the central point. The principle stands. I believe that there was an historical pre-mundane Fall and that the Fall of Adam and Eve was precipitated by Satan's temptation. References to the fall of Satan and angels are found in *2 Peter* 2:4 and *Jude* 6. Related references include *John* 8:44, *2 Corinthians* 11:3 and *Revelation* 20:2. Some find the description of the King of Tyre in *Ezekiel* 28 to include a double reference to the fall of Lucifer.

7.9.9               The *Genesis* 3 narrative of the Fall says that evil originates within creation in opposition to, yet by permission of, God's will, and that it has the positive character of an act of rebellion. In short, it originates in sin. We cannot lift the Fall out of the time series without falling either into the Manichean dualist trap or into unmoral monism. Given the premises of the doctrine of Creation, whatever else it might have been, the Fall *must* have been an event in time. We cannot divorce its religious value from the historical event.

#### 7.10.0               **Corruption of the Image of God**

7.10.1               Total depravity does not mean that every person is as bad as he or she could be, only that to varying degrees no aspect of human nature remains untouched by sin. The extent to which this is the case so far as any part of human nature is concerned is the point at issue. How sinful sinners are and how far they fall beneath the ideals of the

divine image may not be judged merely by self-knowledge or social mores, but by the standards of the pre-Fall nature of Adamic life, by the standards of the righteousness of God and, finally, by the revelation of true, undamaged humanity historically disclosed in the incarnate life of Christ.

7.10.2           The *anakephalaiosis*, the redintegration of humanity in Jesus Christ, marks the inauguration of a new humanity, meaning restoration of the image of God within human life. This is recapitulation, renewal, a making whole that which was damaged by sin. It is a key theme of Irenaeus' Christology. Christ became what we are so that he might bring us to be that which he is himself, the Second Adam, the Last Man, as Paul declares in *Romans* 5:12-21. Irenaeus says (*Against Heresies*, 5.21.1, translated by Cyril C. Richardson, *Library of Christian Classics*, Volume 1):

7.10.3           *He therefore completely renewed all things, both taking up the battle against our enemy, and crushing him who at the beginning had led us captive in Adam, trampling on his head, as you find in Genesis ... so renewing in himself that primal man from whom the formation of man by woman began, that as our race went down to death by a man who was conquered we might ascend again to life by a man who overcame; and as death won the palm of victory over us by a man, so we might by a man receive the palm of victory over death.*

7.10.4           If, as I have argued, the image of God is selfhood, qualified as an intelligent self, a valuing self, and a purposing self, then it follows that corruption of the image involves damage to these aspects of human nature. This calls for more extended discussion than I can allow here. First, the self is damaged chiefly by being at odds with itself. The inner cohesion of the human personality is injured, sometimes dangerously so. Second, reasoning is often corrupted. In *1 Corinthians* 1-2 Paul does not dismiss human reason. He warns against reasoning based on wrong premises which reaches wrong conclusions. Third, human valuing becomes distorted to the extent that values can be inverted. Black can be called white and white can be called black (*Isaiah* 5:20). Persistent error may lead to engrained error intellectually and morally for which the cure is redemption and re-orientation of intellectual and moral categories (*Ephesians* 4:17-24). Fourth, purpose turns into purposelessness, the frustration of pointless existence without hope. The damaged image of God is reflected in alienation, distortion, frustration and, finally, habituation into unfreedom from which self-deliverance is not possible.

7.10.5           The key feature of the restored image in humanity is the redintegration of an obedient will, which is precisely what Christ exhibits in his own humanity. It is a will which adheres to the will of God, in contrast to a deviant will which rebels against God. In *Hebrews* 9:7, 9, *I come to do thy will, O God* is at the heart of the incarnate Lord's life. It is into that obedience that the restored sinner is taken up. *By the which will we have been sanctified* (9:10) means that the sinner who has acted wrongly, or in ignorance, or out of mixed motives has been taken up into Christ's own obedience through the renewal of human nature authentically into the image of God.

## 7.11.0           **Original Sin**

7.11.1           The doctrine of original sin, or inherited sin, remains one of the most intractable of theological problems related to a social as well as to a biblical understanding of fallen human nature

7.11.2           Not a few American theological Liberals have been puzzled that Reinhold Niebuhr, one of the key figures of mid-twentieth century Liberal Theology, should have argued in favor of the concept. Niebuhr held that any optimistic view of human nature and of humanity's future must include a realistic assessment of human propensity to evil. The common allegation is that the dogma derives from primitive myth even when defined in its psychological form as excessive self-regard. Niebuhr argues that *the view*

*that men are "sinful" is one of the best attested and empirically verified facts of human existence ("Sin," A Handbook of Christian Theology, edited by A. Halvarson and A. Cohen, 1960). He said that this has been obscured by excessive post-Enlightenment optimism about human nature. The source of human evils cannot be attributed solely to social, political or economic causes, or to inertia caused by ignorance.*

- 7.11.3 Niebuhr identifies two key non-religious shapers of modern thought as allies.
- 7.11.4 First, Thomas Hobbes held that reason is invariably the tool of self-interest not far removed from brute behavior which could be defined as "total depravity."
- 7.11.5 Second, Sigmund Freud was pessimistic about humanity's future because he held that society crippled its members by means of early indoctrination. The ego (the rational, coherent self) is caught between the "id" (pleasure-seeking drive) and the socially imposed "super-ego" (social restrictions, inhibitions, moral obligation) which results in neurosis. Increasingly, complex industrial and cultural communities would tend to repress the id-ego more and more, which would result in more aggressive tendencies. The cycle is inexorable. Freud's view is a theory of human animality formulated as a pessimistic anthropodicy - an understanding of the universality of human neurosis and aggressiveness focused upon the ego.
- 7.11.6 Niebuhr felt that neither Hobbes nor Freud adequately comprehended the paradox of freedom and its creative and destructive capacities which arise from the possibility of human transcendence over behavioral impulses. Nevertheless, in contrast to Hobbes, Freud's theory was ego-driven. It reached to the core of human personality.
- 7.11.7 Original sin defined as human disfunctionality is thus seen in human anxiety, neurosis, tensions over moral obligation, and resulting social discord and aggression which social programs and conditioning cannot cure. Niebuhr's views were a direct blow to Liberalism's optimism about human perfectibility.
- 7.11.8 The doctrine of original sin attempts to frame a rationale for the universal tendency of human beings to sin, i.e., sins which come from the depths of one's being. Jesus said that it is *from within, out of the heart of man* that the various evils come (*Mark 7:21*). Universal sinning is an empirical fact. It is a universal taint. It appears to be a universal inclination in the human heart, an inclination of the self. There is a disposition to sin - some say a pre-disposition. How can one account for it? All of the attempted explanations seek to account for the universal human tendency to sin as, nevertheless, a *willful* radical universal tendency to sin. How can one reconcile what is to some inevitability with responsibility?
- 7.11.9 Two ranges of biblical data bear on this question. The first is general data which in the Scriptures comprise an assumed backdrop to proper understanding of human nature, and which is referred to in many different ways; and, second, data which is Pauline-specific.
- 7.11.10 The general data center on the conviction that since the Fall human beings are not born into the state of pre-Fall Adam as Pelagius thought. This conviction is apparent as well in Paul who says that those who are in the flesh cannot please God (*Romans 8:8*). If evils have their genesis in sin as most Christians including myself believe, then not only does universal post-Adamic actual sinning confirm that humans are not born into the pre-Adamic state, the tragedy in an evil-infected world of undeserved conditions such as mongoloidism and other genetic pathologies reinforce that understanding. As well, that the sins of parents which result in such diseases as syphilis and Aids are in fact visited upon children who don't deserve to suffer may be another indicator of human solidarity tainted by sin and evil since the Fall.

- 7.11.11 Other ways in which the concept of original sin is reflected in biblical thought include: The universal necessity of the new birth because *that which is born of the flesh is flesh* in Jesus words to Nicodemus reflects it (*John* 3:6). Jesus' rejoinder to his critics, *If God were your father* as well reflects teaching in the New Testament that there is a distinction between that which is sinfully natural and that which is spiritual. The phrase *lusts of the flesh* is a general hint as to the status of entire human nature. These allusions are representative of the pervasive teaching in the Scriptures that *I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me* (*Psalms* 51:5).
- 7.11.12 Paul makes the important distinction between actual sin and original sin. Augustine phrases the matter nicely in his confession:
- 7.11.13 *Those sins which I have committed, both against thee, and myself, yea, many and grievous offenses against others, over and above that bond of original sin, whereby we all die in Adam.*
- 7.11.14 To say that the universality of sin is an empirical fact is one thing; to account for it scientifically, philosophically and theologically is another. The issue is not unlike the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. The fact is stated, there are hints as to the method of inspiration, but in the end we do not know how inspiration actually took place. Similarly with original sin. The evil inclination of the human heart is biblically stated and is, I believe, verifiable historically, but conclusions on how to account for the universal taint are found wanting.
- 7.11.15 The critical passage is *Romans* 5:12-21, especially verses 12-14. In this passage Paul is concerned with universality: how sin, condemnation and death have come to the human race through the one sin of the one man Adam, in contrast to how obedience, justification and life have come to the human race through the obedience of the one new man, Jesus Christ. Clearly, what comes to the human race through Adam and Christ comes because of the acts of each. Something deeper is at work than the guilt of individual, actual sinning which is shown to be sin by the law of Moses, since guilt, condemnation and death were operative before the giving of the law (*Romans* 5:13-14). What is that something else?
- 7.11.16 At issue is the enigmatic phrase *because all men sinned* in 5:12. J. B. Phillips translates the passage euphemistically: *This, then, is what happened. Sin made its entry into the world through one man, and through sin, death. The entail of sin and death passed on to the whole human race, and no one could break it for no one was himself free from sin.* This neatly escapes the force of *because all men sinned*, while acknowledging universality and inevitability. Gerrit Verkyhl in his *Berkeley Version* of the New Testament, along with the *Authorized Version*, is unrelenting in conveying the starkness of the phrase, *in that all sinned*. In what sense did they sin?
- 7.11.17 Is this genetically hypothetical, in the sense of humans having implicitly sinned in Adam? Is it numerical unity of all humans in Adam? Is it mechanical transmission? And if so, what is transmitted and what does "mechanical" mean? Is it imputation, simply the fiat of a divine accounting procedure which attributes to humanity what Adam did? Or, is it a convoluted way of saying that sin is reckoned to all of humanity because it is actual in all of humanity? At bottom, I think the passage is saying that, as to heredity, human beings reproduce other human beings who like themselves have a tendency, an inclination, to sin. That this tendency is reinforced by social factors goes without saying. To say, however, that *because all sinned* means imputation apart from on-going, reproductive condition is to misread the passage.
- 7.11.18 Paul is not speaking of privation, but of loss of uprightness, of proneness to evil, such that not merely one faculty of human nature is affected, but the whole person to varying degrees. Luther spoke of it as the tinder of sin (*fomes peccati*), as the law of the

flesh, the inherent feebleness or tendency of human nature. Basically it has to do with the corruption of the image of God in human beings, as previously discussed.

7.11.19 Two conclusions seem to follow:

7.11.20 First, the solidarity of the human race as fallen. This solidarity is social and moral. It is, in light of Paul, more than representational in Adam. The biological implications are uncertain but probable in light of the human condition.

7.11.21 Second, we are talking about the fallen nature of all human beings born of Adam. Along with Augustine, I take this to mean seminal nature not seminal identity. A human being is born the kind of person that sins. It is an evil inclination. I believe it to be an inherited tendency of which to varying degrees we are aware. Hence, the problem of original sin includes not only proneness to sin, but also capacity to be aware of and be affected by good. We can contribute to increased bondage through sinful actions, as Augustine warned, or turn to grace for succor.

7.11.22 The truth of the doctrine of original sin has an important propaedeutic role in human affairs. It is a pillar in the democratic process because of the risk that power may be abused. Central to the democratic process is not merely the right to elect but, equally important, the right to eject. Marxist, Socialist and Totalitarian rule has been inherently ideologically perfectionist, founded on the myth of natively benign leadership. Democratic rule assumes that while leaders can and hopefully will act benignly, there lurks the danger of corrupting the use of power. This danger is very real and it compels inclusion of processes enabling a society to get rid of evil or undesirable rulers by peaceful means. The doctrine of the inherent goodness of man does not work in politics. Checks and balances are needed due to the inherent tendency to corruption. Commitment to high ideals ought to countervail the tendency but, sadly, human propensities to sin do not always allow them to do so. Paul's mourning about his own condition (*Romans 7:14-20*) states the fact even though he is unclear as to a rationale for the reality of original sin, along with the note of saving renewal in Christ:

7.11.23 *We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me.*

*So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.*

7.12.0 **Sin**

7.12.1 In Materialism and Idealism sin does not, indeed ultimately cannot, exist. In the Materialist system whatever is, is; there is no transcendent standard of values to judge something to be right or wrong. Morals are reduced to mores - they become arbitrary, socially devised rules to serve self-interest not moral obligation. This perspective is at the center of the current debate about values in America. The hedonist, behavioral model does not allow for binding moral obligation. In the Idealist systems sin and evil are essentially unrealities of an unreal world, or aspects of reality which in the Absolute will

be seen to be part of a perfect whole, or are built-in surd elements in the material world against which a finite God is himself struggling.

- 7.12.2 P. T. Forsyth commented in an apt aphorism that sin is action and action (the Cross) is its cure. Sin is transgression of the divine law. Sin is an offense against God. While we extend use of the term to non-moral matters, such as "literary sins," sin identifies willed actions which contravene known religious or moral principles, which are themselves sanctioned by God's law. Paul remarks that *where there is no law there is no transgression (Romans 4:15)*. John says that he who commits sin transgresses the law *for sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4)*. At its core it is willful; in its practice sin creates bondage infused by guilt and helpless awareness of a sinful condition.
- 7.12.3 Sin is a form of evil and is probably its genesis. We observe a least four forms of evil: First, ignorance (evil often results from even well-intentioned acts). Second, ugliness (distortion of life and environment, the twisting of things, the frustration of incompleteness). Third, suffering, especially undeserved suffering (due to disease, catastrophe and evil intent), and sin (willful acts by rational beings). Of these Christians identify sin as the worst form of evil because it is the corruption of a person's inmost being. Jesus said that *there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him ... For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts ... (Mark 7:15, 21)*. Sin is not curable by human progress, it is an obstacle in human social relations, and hinders faith in God.
- 7.12.4 As to the co-existence of good and evil in the world, five possibilities present themselves.
- 7.12.5 a) That only good is real and that evil is an illusion, as certain types of Idealism say (Christian Science is a modern religious form of this view). This view attempts to cure evil by thinking it away.
- 7.12.6 b) That only evil is real and good is illusory. I once thought that no one could believe this, but some contemporary forms of pessimism and idolatry deify evil and satanic powers.
- 7.12.7 c) That the very distinction between good and evil is illusory, as held by some monistic mystical systems.
- 7.12.8 d) That Good and Evil co-exist as eternal competing principles as, for example, in Manicheanism, or in popular modern folk concepts of Dualism.
- 7.12.9 e) That only good is eternally and ultimately real, but evil is a present reality within the created universe. This last possibility expresses Christian belief as based upon the biblical doctrine of Creation. Evil for the Christian, like contingency and freedom, must be accepted as a reality within the created order which cannot be explained away or dissolved into some more ultimate reality.
- 7.12.10 The doctrine of creation implies that ultimate reality is of the nature of personal life, mechanism is not the mode of the relation between God and the world, contingency and freedom are real, and grace is not an illusion. It is within such a context that the reality of sin and sin's gravity can be understood. Sin is against God. The full implications of the doctrine of creation relieve Christians of any need to resort to notions that sin and evil are non-being, privation of goodness, or illusion. Christians reject merely verbal solutions to the real problems of sin and evil.
- 7.12.11 Of the various forms of evil, sin seems to be the primeval one. The doctrine of the Fall expresses the truth that evil has originated within creation through creaturely rebellion. Thus while evil has forms other than sin, the moral model of the universe

which Christians hold in contrast to the determinist and illusionist models places the origin of evil in sin.

7.12.12 Sin violates that which is right by an act which is wrong. The difference between right and wrong, and doing that which is wrong, is the defining moment for sin. Right and wrong stand for objective characteristics which attach directly and inalienably to acts and their consequences. Christians agree with moral realists that we are each subject to an unconditional standard of value. But Christians hold that right and good are judged morally by more than the standard of being conducive to the maximum possible good (conversely wrong and bad by what is inimical to it). Christians are also sympathetic to the idealist premise (as in Plato) that right and wrong relate to the standard of the ultimate good and that it is always better to do right than wrong. But they relate the rightness or wrongness of acts not simply to intrinsic good but to the Biblical revelation that the good and right are what God wills. To ask whether the will of God is good is redundant.

7.12.13 Christians insist that the Bible reveals the will of God in specific terms. Christian morality is not based upon situational ethics in which every person does that which is right in his or her own eyes (*Judges 20:25*). Moral judgments are more than culturally fashioned and biologically induced responses. Nor are they simply expressions of feeling so that "That is wrong" really means "I don't like that." Nor do Christians teach that good and right are dictated arbitrarily by God.

7.12.14 In the Bible the range of terms which identify sin, define it, and address its consequences is extensive. The following lists serve as an introduction to a very large topic. They do not exhaust the meaning of sin, as I shall indicate later. I list only generic terms and merely a reference or two. Many other cognate forms are utilized in the Scriptures.

- 7.12.15 First, Old Testament terms and their uses:
- 7.12.16 a) *Chata'* - translated as sin, sin-offering, and sinful habit. This is the most common Old Testament word for sin. It conveys missing the mark, wrong doing as blameworthy failure or coming short, which can be witting or unwitting. Note: *Leviticus* 4:3; *Psalms* 32:1; 51:2-3, 9.
- 7.12.17 b) *Shagah* - to err through ignorance; to wander or stray, or to cause to wander; apostasy. Note: *Samuel* 26:21, *Isaiah* 53:6.
- 7.12.18 c) *'Avah* - to twist, pervert or distort by evil doing; to wring out of course; perversity. Note: *1 Samuel* 20:30, *2 Chronicles* 6:37, *Psalms* 106:6, *Daniel* 9:5.
- 7.12.19 d) *'Amal* - the toil, travail, burdensomeness of life due to sin. Note: *Deuteronomy* 26:7, *Job* 5:6-7.
- 7.12.20 e) *'Aval* - To be wrong; want of integrity or rectitude. Note *Leviticus* 19:15, 35; *Deuteronomy* 25:16; *Job* 6:29; 16:11; *Psalms* 43:1; *Hosea* 10:13; *Malachi* 2:6.
- 7.12.21 f) *'Avar* - To cross or transgress the boundary of that which is right. Note: *Psalms* 17:3, *Isaiah* 24:5, *Hosea* 6:7, 8:1; *Habbakuk* 1:11.
- 7.12.22 g) *Ra'a'* - badness, wickedness in the sense of breakup and ruin. Note: *Psalms* 5:5; *Proverbs* 2:12, 13:21; *Isaiah* 3:11; *Jeremiah* 21:10; *Micah* 2:1.
- 7.12.23 h) *Pasha'* - Rebellion, revolt, refusal to be subject to lawful authority, trespass. Note: *Genesis* 31:36; *Psalms* 51:1, 3, 13; *Isaiah* 1:2.
- 7.12.24 i) *Rasha'* - wickedness, lawlessness, lawless turbulence, anarchy. Note: *1 Kings* 8:47, *2 Chronicles* 20:35, *Job* 20:29, *Psalms* 1:1, *Micah* 6:10-11.
- 7.12.25 j) *Ma'al* - treachery, faithlessness, breach of trust. Note: *Deuteronomy* 32:51, *Joshua* 7:1, *Ezekiel* 17:20.
- 7.12.26 k) *'Un* - nothingness, the emptiness of idolatry, hollowness, falsehood, deceit. Note: *1 Samuel* 15:23, *Psalms* 10:7, *Isaiah* 41:29.
- 7.12.27 l) *'Asham* - fault, guilt, moral ruin due even to unwitting sin. *Genesis* 42:21, *Leviticus* 4:3, 13; 5:2-5, 19; *Ezra* 10:19; *Jeremiah* 2:3.
- 7.12.28 m) *Chasad* - disgrace, reproach, shame. Note *Leviticus* 20:14, 17; *Proverbs* 25:10.
- 7.12.29 Second, New Testament terms and their uses:
- 7.12.30 a) *Hamartia* - to miss the mark or aim, shortcoming, failure to grasp. This is the most common term for sin in the New Testament. Note: *Romans* 3:23; 5:12-21; 6:1, 12, 23; *1 Corinthians* 15:3.
- 7.12.31 b) *Asebeia* - Godlessness, active irreligion, impiety, irreverence. Note: *Romans* 1:18; 5:6; *2 Timothy* 2:16; *Titus* 2:12.
- 7.12.32 c) *Parakoe* - hearing amiss; disobedience; refusing to hear. Note: *Matthew* 18:17; *Romans* 5:19; *2 Corinthians* 10:6.

- 7.12.33 d) *Anomia* - lawlessness, contravening law. Note: Romans 4:7, Titus 2:14, 1 John 3:4.
- 7.12.34 e) *Parabasis* - transgression of known law, overstepping the law. Note: Matthew 15:2-3, Romans 2:23, Galatians 3:19, Hebrews 2:2.
- 7.12.35 f) *Paraptoma* - lapse, failing, propensity to fall. Note : Matthew 6:14-15; Romans 4:25; 5:15; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 1:7; 2:1, 5.
- 7.12.36 g) *Agnoeo* - ignorance that accompanies sin, failure due to missing the point. Note: Acts 13:27; 17:23; Romans 6:3; Ephesians 4:18.
- 7.12.37 h) *Hettema* - failure to fulfill duty, fault, choosing the wrong alternative. 1 Corinthians 6:7, 2 Peter 2:19-20.
- 7.12.38 i) *Adikia* - unrighteousness, lack of conformity to God's will. Note: Luke 13:27; Acts 1:18; Romans 1:18, 28; 2:8; Hebrews 1:9.
- 7.12.39 j) *Kakos* - evil, bad, worthless. Note: Matthew 24:48; John 18:30; Romans 1:30; Hebrews 5:14.
- 7.12.40 k) *Poneros* - active working of evil, corruption, contagion. Note: Matthew 6:13; 12:34, 35, 39, 45; Romans 12:9; Galatians 1:4.
- 7.12.41 l) *Phaulos* - worker or the working of evil, worthless, base, wicked. Note John 3:20, 2 Corinthians 5:10; James 3:16.
- 7.12.42 The biblical terminology for sin is simply an entre for its rich storehouse of biography. Biblical biography is the mother-lode for mining the true meaning of sin. There are many examples: Abraham's attempt to deceive Pharaoh. David's sin with Bathsheba. Solomon's pursuit of pleasure and fame. Israel and Judah's rebellion and faithlessness. Whole books are devoted to the theme, such as Isaiah and Hosea. The Psalms and Proverbs, and the teaching of Jesus are filled with moral teaching which quickly focuses upon what sin is.
- 7.12.43 The biblical terminology suggests classifications of sin. Which sin, if any, is prime? Historically, a great deal of attention has been devoted to this question. Mostly, Pride is singled out, though Augustine chose Concupiscence (lust). I suggest the following broad classifications as generic, and that willful denial of God, or independence from God, is the root of sin:
- 7.12.44 a) To rebel against, despise, hate God
- 7.12.45 b) To miss the mark, to fail.
- 7.12.46 c) To pervert justice, to twist, destroy.
- 7.12.47 d) To rebel, transgress, betray.
- 7.12.48 e) To act out of ignorance with evil resulting.
- 7.12.49 f) To act out of bondage - the conditioning effects of sinning.
- 7.12.50 g) To love impurity, corruption.
- 7.12.51 In church tradition, there is a rubric which ought to be valued as an instructional tool in fresh ways today, namely, the Seven Deadly Sins. I suggest this along with their

correlates: the four philosophical virtues of Wisdom, Courage, Temperance, Justice; and the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Love. The Seven Deadly Sins are: Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Avarice, Gluttony and Lust. One of the best restatements of sin for modern readers is Henry Fairlie's *The Seven Deadly Sins Today*, 1978. Other modern writers who have revived interest in the doctrine, or whose work bears upon the concept, include O. Hobart Mowrer, *The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion* (1961) who criticizes the sickness theory of human lapse as against the concept of sin, and argues that recognition of sin and responsibility is the first step to wholeness. M. Scott Peck in *People of the Lie* (1983) focuses upon radical evil in human experience. Augustine's *Confessions* remains the classic of a sinner's self-analysis along with his testimony to God's enveloping grace and forgiveness.

### 7.13.0 **Freedom and Responsibility**

7.13.1 Two important influences are evident in discussions on responsibility among Christians in America since the middle of this century.

7.13.2 The first is a particular understanding of the love of God which comprises chiefly an intramural debate within the Christianity community. The second is a particular understanding of citizen culpability for wrong-doing and the effects this has on the way Christians think society ought to work.

7.13.3 The first argues that God who is love forgives sin and does not, indeed cannot, punish sinners.

7.13.4 The second is based on modern theories of behavior which attribute deviant behavior to genetic factors or social conditions or both. The trend has been toward a behavioral model of human nature. Diagnosis of aberrant behavior is based upon a sickness or dysfunction model, not a moral model of deviant or criminal intent, hence therapy not punishment should be the response to such behavior.

7.13.5 No Christian disputes the critical importance of genetic and social factors. The question is whether all or most deviant behavior is due to causally inescapable factors, whether even in cases of documentable causal factors responsibility can be altogether escaped, and how many of such cases there actually are? A psychotic person is one thing, but is someone who commits a crime when drunk or on drugs free of responsibility when he or she knows the power of such abuse? It is known that some persons have gotten drunk or high on drugs in order to commit crimes of violence, knowing that he or she would be judged legally not competent in the moment of committing the crime. Increasingly, society is being pushed back to a moral model of behavior because the purely naturalistic, behavioral model is inadequate as a guide to human nature, as a frame of reference for interpreting the human condition, or as furnishing standards of behavior for society.

7.13.6 No theological, psychological or social theory is credible which denies the reality of freedom and its corollary, moral responsibility.

7.13.7 While Christians are critical of the determinist behavioral model, in their own way they should take warning when within their own ideology freedom is denied. There is in some quarters the curious anomaly of theologically affirming human responsibility for sin but at the same time denying freedom on grounds of the sovereignty of God in predestination. No theology can stand which implies that God acts by fiat, by determinate decree of his own nature and will, but not necessarily in relation to the freedom and moral responsibility of creatures he has created. Abraham knew enough about God to plead plaintively for Sodom and Gomorra, *shall not the Judge of all the earth do right* (*Genesis 18:25*).

- 7.13.8 It begs the question to say that all things glorify God and will be shown to glorify God. It begs the question to say that God's works glorify him, and that his purposes will ultimately glorify him. These amount to identical propositions. In what particular respects is this the case? Can one make a statement which has specific content?
- 7.13.9 I believe that God's central purpose is to create freedom; to create free good persons who will love and honor him, and in fellowship with him will serve as co-workers in his creation. The function of the truth of the Gospel is to create freedom. Jesus said, *you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free*. He adds, *if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed* (John 8:32, 36). When one links this with Christ's own loving obedience, *Lo, I have come to do thy will* (Hebrews 10:5-10), one has in hand some of the key links of the golden chain which ties the Bible together. True freedom is to know and do the will of God, but doing the will of God is not bondage, nor is it submission to arbitrary rules. It is the freedom of the sons of God within the terms of the righteousness of God. Christians can say nothing less than that God in relation to his own purposes of grace limits the area of his freedom by the area of ours. Anything less makes nonsense of human moral responsibility.
- 7.13.10 Life can indeed be dominated by forces of evil one cannot control. That does not mean, except in exceptional cases, that one escapes responsibility for doing evil. We *know* that the forces are powerful. We also *know* that we personally do evil.
- 7.13.11 What is freedom? Freedom is a function or capacity of spiritual beings. Persons are spiritual beings. To be a person is to be a self-conscious spiritual reality with the power of rational thought capable of purposeful activity which is morally qualified. Freedom involves the reality of contingency in the world order; namely, that things may go this way or that depending upon the choice of a spiritual being. As spiritual beings persons are free in contrast to matter, i.e., that which is acted upon. More than behavioral responses are in view.
- 7.13.12 Spiritual beings are more or less free; that is, they are more or less spiritual. Christians are called upon to spiritualize their bodily life. This means to act in terms of moral and other ideals which have their norm in the will of God. There is thus a further meaning of freedom; namely, the difference between spiritual bondage and spiritual liberty. As spiritual beings, persons created in the image of God are intended to utilize the elements of a dependable world (i.e., control, including conditioning) to increase freedom. A scientifically dependable world and the reality of persons and their freedom are the truth of the way things are to the Christian. The increase of control can lead to the increase of freedom, whether it is control of one's own life or of the environment. Actions and goals are to be qualified morally by the will of God. Just as God reveals a purpose to create freedom, so Christians see it as a moral ideal to relate to and to treat others as persons, in love, altruistically, for their full development and freedom.
- 7.13.13 Law and punishment are functions of freedom. In recent years, the Agapaic Theology of the Lundensian School in Sweden has profoundly influenced American theology. British theologians such as Hastings Rashdall were part of that trend (*The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, 1925). Anders Nygren in *Agape and Eros* (1932) defines God's Law in relation to the "works of the law" which Paul rejects, rather than to the Righteousness of God which Paul extols. The Law is not an abstraction having an existence apart from God. The law has its life in God; it manifests God's nature in the moral constitution of the world order: *the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good* (Romans 7:12; note also 3:19-20).
- 7.13.14 The Law of God reveals the will of God. The Law of God expresses the moral nature and conditions of divine and human life. The law of God is the universal, public righteousness of God. Rather than (proper) guilt being a psychological aberration, it is a

critically important factor in true moral relations. Likewise with punishment. Guilt and punishment are both corollaries of freedom.

7.13.15 Law governs community. If the ultimate nature of reality of that of persons and personal relations, it follows that if personal then moral. Law and morality are of the essence of personhood, of the relations between human beings and God, and of the relations among human beings themselves. Human beings are accountable to one another. They are also accountable to God.

7.13.16 A community of persons cannot be a community on a non-moral footing. Law and penalty are the conditions of community life. They are correlatives of freedom, not its antitheses. We cut off our noses to spite our faces if we try to deny punishment in the interests of either freedom or love.

7.13.17 Law says, *thus far you can go, but no further*. What attitude can God take to sin? He is not ignorant of it. He cannot condone it. He cannot ignore it. Morally, he must judge sin and evil, and he has judged them by law and penalty. Punishment vindicates righteousness. While punishment can usefully deter and reform, to be moral it *must* vindicate a moral standard and it *must* be retributive else it is immoral. A free society must demand responsibility of its citizens, and this responsibility is patterned after the moral relations between God and humanity which are quintessentially expressed in the significance of the Cross.

7.13.18 Early in this century when Liberal Theology rejected the idea of God's wrath, followed by re-definition of God's love to exclude judgment in the Cross, voices were raised against these trends but they were not heard. At the time F. H. Bradley, the British philosopher, declared that rejection of punishment for the sake of punishment is sentimental sophistry (*Ethical Studies*, 1927, pp. 26-27):

7.13.19 *Punishment is punishment, only where it is deserved. We pay the penalty, because we owe it, and for no other reason; and if punishment is inflicted for any other reason whatever than because it is merited by wrong, it is a gross immorality, a crying injustice, an abominable crime, and not what it pretends to be. We may have regard for whatever considerations we please - our own convenience, the good of society, the benefit of the offender; we are fools, and worse, if we fail to do so. Having once the right to punish, we may modify the punishment according to the useful and the pleasant; but these are external to the matter, they can not give a right to punish, and nothing can do that but criminal desert.*

#### 7.14.0 **Grace and the World**

7.14.1 Grace is the indispensable feature of God's relation to the world, given God's personal nature and his purpose to create human beings in his own image. The importance of this truth is often insufficiently grasped.

7.14.2 The biblical doctrine of grace is not a monotone. It is a harmony of two tones which unite in a majestic symphony: There is the salvific meaning of grace, and there is the paradigmatic meaning of grace. It is the latter which is in view here, following a brief identification of the salvific sense of grace.

7.14.3 The salvific meaning of grace will be addressed later under the doctrine of salvation. It is the foundation of salvation - the *sola gratia* of the Reformers - that we are saved by grace, and grace alone. It is the sense of grace as God's unmerited favor to sinners; of his opportune, unsolicited aid to the needy and helpless. It is, as well, grace as the on-going feature of the Christian life. This carries with it questions which divide the Christian communions as to how grace is received and whether grace concerns primarily imputed or infused righteousness, or both.

- 7.14.4 In its paradigmatic sense grace is central to our understanding of the kind of world God has created. The paradigmatic meaning of grace comprises the frame of reference of the salvific meaning of grace.
- 7.14.5 Grace is the mode of God's relation to the world in virtue of which God's perfection and aseity are re-affirmed, and the independence of the world and the reality of freedom are assured. The doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo* implies not only that the world had a beginning but also that it is of such and such a kind. Grace is the rationale of a world created by the personal God for persons. It is a rationale which is at variance with other models such as that the earthly is related to the heavenly as appearance is related to reality; that the world flows from the being not the will of God; that God is locked into an evolving process and is himself evolving; or that the infinite being of God must be shielded from the non-being of the natural order by intermediaries.
- 7.14.6 Grace says that God is neither too proud to create a real world nor is he too remote to care for it. The doctrine of grace is uniquely relevant to modern thought in view of the reduction of human beings conceptually to bundles of non-personal motor-affective responses. The pursuit of personal identity in our time reflects deep concern about the nature and future of humanity. The Christian creation-personhood view may be more important to the future of humanity than has been assumed. For Christians, human life is not a transient mode of existence in which a more enduring system of patterns expresses itself, whether transcendentalist in nature or impersonal cosmic process. In these grace in the Christian paradigmatic sense is not needed because freedom is an illusion. This is the core of Augustine's dissatisfaction with the Idealist systems which he details in the *Confessions* along with his turning to the Creation-Fall-Redemption world view. In a unique way the Biblical categories are a call to arms for the defense of the essential nature and infinite value of human beings. Ultimately the reduction of human nature to behavioral responses, or the merging of human nature into some alleged higher reality, is immoral. By maintaining that human beings are spiritual and creative agents, which attests to their being more than causally determined creatures, and more than ephemeral reflections of another world, Christians do not opt out of the scientific age and neither do they concede the debate to Transcendentalist mythologies or Materialist pessimism. Christian belief is anti-reductionist and is person-preserving.
- 7.14.7 Freedom is the chief end of creation and grace makes realization of freedom possible. Without grace there cannot be inter-personal relations and freedom. Grace allows for the power of choice. Grace furnishes the framework in which freedom is not only possible but in which it becomes a reality. Grace meets humans at the points of their unfreedom, beckoning them into the freedom of sons and daughters of God.

# THE WORK OF CHRIST

Samuel J. Mikolaski

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### 8.0.0 Christ's Three-fold Office

- 8.1.0** The purpose of the Incarnation has traditionally been defined as a three-fold mission: that Christ came to fulfill the offices of Prophet, Priest and King. This "Three-fold Office" understanding is embedded historically in the theology of all the major Christian traditions, but it was theologians of the Protestant Reformation, especially the Reformed theologians following John Calvin, who restored interest in the concept. It has been a fixture in Protestant evangelical theology, especially for Catechetical instruction.

Since the mid-twentieth century, use of the concept except for historical reference has waned along with diminished interest in catechizing converts in favor of new member instruction which focuses more upon discipleship and stewardship than doctrine.

- 8.1.1 The Three-fold Office concept derives from Scriptures which so define Christ's roles. References to the roles of Prophet, Priest and King abound in the Early Fathers. A conscious, specific effort to expound the significance of Christ's ministry within this frame of reference is that of Eusebius (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, I.3) where he declares,
- 8.1.2 *We have also received the tradition that some of the prophets themselves had by anointing already become Christs in type, seeing that they all refer to the true Christ, the divine and heavenly Logos, of the world the only High Priest, of all creation the only king, of the prophets the only arch-prophet of the Father. The proof of this is that no one of those symbolically anointed of old, whether priests or kings or prophets, obtained such power of divine virtue as our Savior and Lord, Jesus, the only real Christ, has exhibited ... that until this present day he is honored by his worshippers throughout the world as king, wondered at more than a prophet, and glorified as the true and only High Priest of God.*
- 8.1.3 Jesus identified himself with the preaching, teaching and revelatory functions of a **Prophet** and, as well, with the sufferings inflicted upon the prophets of God in the Old Testament when they were rejected by the people (*Matthew* 23:29-39; *Luke* 4:24-30; 13:31-35). He calls himself a prophet. He claims to bring a message from God the Father (*John* 8:25-30; 14:10-11; 17:8, 26). People recognized him to be a prophet (*Matthew* 21:11, 16; *Luke* 7:16; *John* 3:2; 4:19). He both proclaimed the righteousness of God and embodied it in himself: *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God* is applied to him.
- 8.1.4 In the Bible, Jesus Christ is also presented as **King**. This is based on his fulfillment of the Messianic promise as the "Anointed One," which is summarized by the Gospel writers in the exclamation of Nathaniel, *Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel* (*John* 1:49) and epitomized in the ironic superscription over the Cross, *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews* (*John* 19:19). He was rumored to be the Messiah-King (*Acts* 17:7), accorded kingship by his followers (*Hebrews* 1:8; *Revelation* 1:5) and expected to return in regal splendor and power (1 Timothy 6:14-16; *Revelation* 11:15; 19:16). Until his return he exercises spiritual suzerainty in the lives of his followers, which is expressed in the confessional "Jesus is Lord". The principles of his Kingdom are to be viewed not merely as hypothetical prolepses but are actually to be lived out by his followers through the help of the Spirit whom he sent in view of his return (*John* 16:13-14). A crucial event which highlights his Lordship occurred early in his ministry as part of the inauguration of that ministry: as the Second Adam he triumphed over the Tempter on (earthly) site where the First Adam fell. He inaugurates a new humanity. The measure of his triumph is measured morally by his obedience to the will of God.
- 8.1.5 Kingship and self-abnegation also define his role as **Priest**. Thus, when we speak of the "Work of Christ" we usually mean his sacrifice and death for sin, rather than the whole scope of his prophetic, kingly and priestly ministry. Nevertheless, the quality of his sacrificial act as our High Priest calls for recognition along with the atonement it accomplished.
- 8.1.6 The surpassing worth of his priestly work over the Aaronic priesthood is the theme of the *Book of Hebrews*. Contrast is intended. He, the sinless one, needed not to first offer up a sacrifice for his own sins. His was the singular, unique royal priesthood of Melchizedek, without generational or ethical limitations. His death was first spiritual then physical. It was obedience unto death, fully, consciously grasped, in full obedience to the penal issue created by human sin. It was our death consciously entered into, not death recognized as just by a guilty conscience. His royal priesthood made sacrifice on the scale of world redemption having due regard for God's holiness.

8.1.7 His sacrifice is unrepeatable (Hebrews 7:11,16-17, 26-28; 9:11-12, 26). It secures an eternal redemption which includes his on-going intercession for his followers (Hebrews 4:14-15; 9:24; 10:29-22).

## 8.2.0 Principles and Hypotheses

8.2.1 It is a theological oddity that discussions of the significance of the Work of Christ often degenerate to comparisons of 'Theories of the Atonement.' Literature on the Work of Christ abounds with references to this or that 'theory' of the Atonement. I say odd, because this is not done for any other doctrine, say 'theory' about God, or 'theory' of the Incarnation.

8.2.2 Not a few writers have expanded discussion of the priestly role of Christ to embrace the whole range of what sacrifice, atonement and reconciliation mean. For example, A. H. Strong in his *Systematic Theology* addresses the mission of Christ in his incarnation under the rubric of the Three-fold Office. He begins with three pages on Christ's Prophetic Office. He concludes with less than two pages on the Kingly Office. But, in between these two themes he devotes over sixty densely packed pages to the Priestly Office in which he expounds the meaning of Christ's sacrifice and compares theories of the Atonement. The imbalance is puzzling.

8.2.3 Historically, four main hypotheses dominate discussion as to the meaning of Christ's death, though each of these is not singular. They represent a general concept under which are grouped biblical data. Interpretation within the groupings occasions considerable difference of opinion as to the meaning of the biblical message.

8.2.4 First, **The Penal or Satisfaction View of the Work of Christ.** This view is a long-standing tradition among all the churches going back to the Church Fathers. The Sacrifice of Christ is understood to be the judgment death of sin. The death of Christ is Penal. It has a forensic significance as a meeting of the conditions laid down by God's holiness and righteousness. The death of Christ satisfied divine justice. Christ is our substitute. He died in our place. His death was the death we were condemned to die. In modern evangelical literature this perspective is commonly known as the Penal Substitutionary Theory of the Atonement.

8.2.5 This view of the sacrifice of Christ did not displace or minimize other meanings of the Cross such as that the Cross is the gift of God's love, but emphasis on the juridical side lent credence to criticisms that the Penal view is one-sided. This view is prominent in Protestant Evangelical theology, notably in the work of Martin Luther and John Calvin. These and other Reformers sought to re-establish the finality of the Cross as God's provision for and dealing with sin, condemnation and death. The only appropriate response to grace is faith, they said, in opposition to medieval sacramental and penance theory which allowed for meritorious works for salvation. They emphasized the all-sufficiency of the objective Work of Christ.

8.2.6 Modern evangelical proponents of the Satisfaction view include R. W. Dale, P. T. Forsyth and James Denney. Emil Brunner and Karl Barth emphasized objective atonement, especially Barth who developed the substitution theme in a powerful way. Leonard Hodgson vigorously championed the doctrine of the objective work of Christ.

8.2.7 Second, **The Sacrificial View of the Work of Christ.** Promulgation of this view marked a radical shift in mid-twentieth century thinking away from the Liberalism which had dominated thinking during the early part of the century. It is held that Christ's death was in some sense a redeeming sacrifice, indeed, the supreme sacrifice. While this concept inheres in discussions from the times of the Early Church Fathers, in recent times attempts were made to separate the concept of sacrifice from the penal or forensic

overtones which had been attached to it historically. The core thesis is that the sacrifice of Christ is indeed vicarious and representative. It is a sacrifice on our behalf. But it is an expiation for human sin not a judgment for sin, nor is it either a propitiation or propitiatory in relation to God's holiness. This understanding of the Sacrifice of Christ has been eloquently articulated in modern times by theologians who sought to recover biblical theology from the effects of the Liberal Theology attack on and rejection of the concept of Sacrifice. Included are Oliver Quick, Vincent Taylor, C. H. Dodd, T. W. Manson, William Manson and A. M. Hunter. Their view is that the object of sacrifice is to cleanse the defilement of sin. Thus, Oliver Quick argues that the blood of a voluntary victim, in contrast to the involuntary sacrifice of animals, a sacrifice that is vicarious, can take away sin. This sacrifice avails because the life given on the Cross first conquered temptation. But the sacrifice should not be seen as the death of a substitute under penal conditions.

8.2.8                   Third, **The Moral Influence View of the Work of Christ.** Various forms of this view dominated Liberal Theology thinking on the Cross which sometimes is called **The Exemplarist View of the Work of Christ.** It is a common belief among Christians that the genesis of the Incarnation and Sacrifice of Christ is the love of God. The Moral Influence Theory has its roots in the theology of Peter Abelard (1070-1142). In this century it has been powerfully advocated in Britain by Hastings Rashdall and in Sweden by the Lundensian School, particularly in the work of Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, ET 1953. In the United States, Horace Bushnell (1807-1876) advanced a similar view a century ago, followed by theologians such as Nels S. F. Ferre' who was strongly influenced by the Lundensian School.

8.2.9                   According to this view, Christ comes as God's agent bearing the message of unconditional love and forgiveness. Forgiveness did not and does not necessitate sacrifice. Christ's sacrifice exhibits the reality and intensity of God's love (*greater love has no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends*). Christ, whether understood to be God incarnate or a divinely inspired holy person, suffers *in* and *with* humanity, not *for* humanity. Such a display of sympathy and suffering love ought to evoke penitence and faith from anyone who hears about it and ponders its significance. Proponents seem to be saying that the Cross symbolizes God's love but is not God's act. Further, if they are arguing that the Cross is God's act, is it mere gesture? What meaning, on what grounds, is to be attached to the act? The issue of judgment of sin, so common in the Scriptures, is dismissed because it is deemed to be primitive to attribute wrath to a loving God.

8.2.10                   Fourth, the **Christ as Victor Theory of the Work of Christ.** This view was popularized about a half-century ago by Gustaf Aulen in his book *Christus Victor* (ET 1953) and later by J. S. Whale, *Victor and Victim*, 1960. Aulen said that a prominent but little noticed theme in the Church Fathers is the concept of Christ's triumph over Satan and the powers of evil; hence at times the theory is called **The Classic Theory of the Atonement.**

8.2.11                   Some of the early Church Fathers said that Satan sought to destroy the humanity of Christ at the Temptation but was thwarted by the deity. By means of Christ's triumph over the powers of evil through the Temptation and the Cross they have been deprived of their dominion over humanity. Aulen sees the victory in an analogous but different way and claims that his thesis is a key feature of Luther's theology. Aulen's version demythologizes the demonic powers and posits instead the impasse between Law and Grace. The triumph of the Cross becomes the triumph of salvation by Grace as against salvation by Law. This formulation escapes from what some feel to be a gross element in the Classical version, namely, that the victory is that the death of Christ is a ransom paid to the Devil to rescue humanity from his grasp. But I think that the views of the Church Fathers have not been properly understood.

8.2.12 None of these views can encompass the rich variety of metaphors and images which describe and define the Work of Christ in the Bible. In many respects these major hypotheses overlap conceptually. At strategic points the exegetical footing for some of them must be called into question. In the end, a single generalization cannot do justice to Biblical teaching.

8.3.0 **Biblical Concepts, Metaphors and Images**

8.3.1 What are the biblical data which go into the formulation of a doctrine of the Work of Christ. Merely to list them suggests points of contiguity and the importance of classification. Classification leads to adoption of broad categories under which one subsumes contiguous concepts. Which concepts should be regarded as prime categories? For example, on the list which follows I show Love, Sacrifice, Atonement, Redemption, Mediation, and Triumph to be prime categories. One could just as well argue that Purification and Reconciliation should be regarded as prime categories. We are left with the fact that one's insight into the rationale of each concept will determine the organization and elucidation of the schema relative to perceived importance of the concept in biblical teaching. These insights must be based on argument which has a valid exegetical base and must then cohere with the key emphases of the Christian Gospel.

|       |            |                                                                         |
|-------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8.3.2 | LOVE       | Love                                                                    |
|       | SACRIFICE  | Sacrifice<br>Lamb<br>Purification                                       |
|       | ATONEMENT  | Atonement<br>Propitiation<br>Expiation<br>Blood                         |
|       | REDEMPTION | Redemption<br>Ransom<br>Substitution<br>Representation<br>Vicariousness |
|       | MEDIATION  | Mediation<br>Reconciliation<br>Covenant                                 |
|       | TRIUMPH    | Victory                                                                 |

8.3.3 Issues confront one in the handling of the data which will control understanding of these concepts. Consider the following:

8.3.4 **1. Love.** Is the Cross grounded in the love of God? What is that love? Is the meaning of God's love and the meaning of the Atonement as the expression of God's love grounded in the Trinitarian nature of God? Or, must the idea that God is love and that he loves be demythologized? Instead, does the idea that God is love and that he loves identify human self-love and love as a function of human relations which reinforce self-worth? If so, what does that make of the Cross?

8.3.5 **2. Sacrifice.** As a backdrop to understanding use of the concept in the New Testament with regard to Christ's sacrifice, what is the significance of sacrifice in the Old Testament? Did the Old Testament sacrifices have in view an objective issue, or were they primarily concerned with the attitude of the offerer? Is the death of the victim a

critical factor in any formulation? Is the meaning of sacrifice enriched by the concepts of propitiation and expiation as part of the foundation for the meaning of cleansing and forgiveness? In particular, what role does the ritual of the Day of Atonement have in understanding the sacrifice of Christ and his designation as the Lamb of God?

8.3.6                   **3. Atonement.** Does the Work of Christ have anything to do with law and penalty? What is the relation of sacrifice to the expiation of sin and the propitiation of wrath. Are concepts of divine wrath and the judgment of sin compatible with the doctrine that God is love? What is the theological significance of the blood of Christ? If judgment is a component of that which atonement signifies, how much judgment satisfies the wrath of God?

8.3.7                   **4. Redemption.** Does redemption mean deliverance by God's intervention and power to the side of sacrifice, or is sacrifice as ransom indispensable to the concept of redemption? What is the price that is paid? To whom? Is Christ's death representative, or substitutionary, or vicarious, or all three?

8.3.8                   **5. Mediation.** In what sense does Christ mediate between God and humanity? What is the nature of the New Covenant which he mediates? Is that mediation advocacy or does it include as well sacrificial interposition by one who is both priest and victim? If Christ reconciles humanity to God, on what grounds does this reconciliation take place?

8.3.9                   **6. Triumph.** In what sense can the Cross be called a victory? Can the military metaphor be translated into a moral reality? What, in fact, is the victory of the Cross? In what does it consist?

#### 8.4.0                   **The Cross and the Kerugma**

8.4.1                   The Cross of Christ is central to the Christian Gospel. The New Testament declares that the salvation of the world depends upon the death of the Son of God incarnate. This truth follows from pivotal teaching in the New Testament.

8.4.2                   First, the Cross was not an historical accident. It is not an event which took God off guard. It originated in the eternal counsels of God and is God's act for the salvation of the world. It is an act of loving and gracious condescension.

8.4.3                   Second, the Cross has a distinct bearing upon the world's evil and upon human sin. The Cross points to the restoration of Creation and the abolition of suffering as well as dealing with human guilt. The Cross has a cosmic impact.

8.4.4                   Third, The Cross is the judgment-death for sin. Christ's death is indispensable to salvation and it is sufficient in relation to the wrath of God against sin.

8.4.5                   Fourth, The Cross signifies that it is by the death of Christ that human beings are saved and, further, that Christ's death is the death of death for us in virtue of his resurrection.

8.4.6                   Without writing out expositions of the passages which follow, I list them as representative of the coherent whole which these several strands of the New Testament writings comprise:

8.4.7                   a) Mark-Peter: *Mark* 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34; 14:36; *1 Peter* 1:18-21; 2:24.

8.4.8                   b) Luke: *Acts* 2:23, 36; 3:17-18; 4:26-28; 5:30-31; 10:39, 43; 13:28-39.

8.4.9                   c) Paul: *Romans* 5:8; 8:3, 32; *1 Corinthians* 15:3; *2 Corinthians* 5:14-15, 21; *Galatians* 1:3-4; 3:13; *1 Thessalonians* 5:9-10.

8.4.10                  d) Hebrews: 1:3; 2:9; 3:1; 5:1-6; 9:26, 28; 10:12.

8.4.11                  e) John: 1:29; 3:14-16; 10:17; 12:31-33; *1 John* 1:7; 2:2; 4:10.

8.4.12 The key-feature text of the Gospels as to the cruciality of the Cross is *Mark* 10:45:

*For the Son of Man came also not to be served but to serve  
and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

8.4.13 It is essential in any formulation of the doctrine to conserve the data. The Work of Christ is a coherent, logically consistent whole. But it is like the unity of a diamond which is cut with many facets. The many metaphors and images are like the facets of a diamond. As one turns the diamond, each facet reflects the unity and inner beauty of the stone. So it is with the metaphors and images which highlight the Work of Christ.

8.4.14 We shall grasp more fully what the Work of Christ means when we comprehend better the twin truths that God sent his Son into the world to redeem us by his death on the Cross, and that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself and has now given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

### **8.5.0 Love, Divinity and Redemption**

8.5.1 On the surface there appears to be unanimity: salvation is rooted in the love of God. All theological perspectives agree. But agreement is on the surface. Beneath there are deep ideological rifts.

8.5.2 Earlier I identified ways in which the divine love is seen (3.7.11 - 3.7.14): by some as God's way to the world ontologically; by others as the world's aspiration to the divine; and by still others as the path humans take for self-realization. Each of these demythologizes the divine love. Each denies that God is personal. Each makes of love a function of the created order not of the essential nature of God.

8.5.3 **First**, the love of God is not God's way ontologically to the world. It is not a solution to the problem of creation. Gnostic-type systems of Idealism proposed that through a series of intermediaries down-flowing eros becomes the solution to the problem of creation as to how a Absolute Being is related to an imperfect world. Paul Tillich advocates a modern variant of this by making of the divine love the inhering dynamic of the cosmic process. and the inhering psychological dynamic of sentient life. For Tillich love is the key to the interaction and causation between God and the world. Love is the dynamic of a process which moves toward actualization of an ideal.

8.5.4 Tillich defines love in terms of participation. It is the expression of God (Being-itself) which resists Non-Being. This turgid prose means that love cannot be taken literally when applied to God. Love is generic to the process of divine self-realization in the cosmos. It is a symbol for the realization of Being-itself in the created order: the actuality of being in life. It is God being actualized in the created order. God has a destiny. That destiny is a social order of unity and universal love (Paul Tillich *Systematic Theology*, III, pp. 146-151).

8.5.5 For Tillich, redemption is the overcoming of separation through unconditional re-affirmation. Love is more than *libido* (movement to fulfill need), more than *philia* (movement of equal to equal), more than *eros* (movement of lower to higher). Love is *agape*, which is the state of transcendent unity of unambiguous life. *Agape* is not movement generated by desire but is unconditional affirmation which aims at social harmony.

8.5.6 This definition of love, though useful in discussions of human existential and social alienation, is itself alien to the biblical definition of the love of God. That God is love means something other than that to be in a state of *agape* is to be drawn into the unity of God's life. The divine *agape* is not merely a function of human existence. In the

Bible, love is inherent in the unity of the divine triune life. Love is God's very nature. This is not language which merely symbolizes cosmic, biological, or social process. Rather, God is personal and actively loves. Love is an expression of the divine perfection. It is not divine being expressed as a cosmic dynamic masked by ontological language which identifies an impersonal principle, namely, Being-itself, which Tillich defines as the God beyond the personal God of the Bible.

- 8.5.7 Use of the term love in relation to such a divinity involves a twisting of the very concept of love. Tillich avoids directly engaging the meaning of the apostolic statement that God is love, except to assume on grounds of a superficial charge of anthropomorphism that it cannot be anything but symbolic.
- 8.5.8 **Second**, love is not merely aspiration in the human mind and heart to apprehend or be joined to a posited transcendental reality. Redemptive love in the Scriptures differs from the Greek ideal expressed by *eros*. For example, Plato defines it as aspiration of the soul which transcends love of physical beauty, or soul beauty, or even love of highest knowledge. Eros is the love of the soul for The Absolute, for The Good. The soul aspires to primal unity with transcendent reality from which it has been severed by earthly existence. Eros is the desire to possess The Good, or to ecstatically behold The Good.
- 8.5.9 Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) spoke of the 'intellectual love of God' as a passion in the human soul. The love is in us, not in God who is defined as Nature. Redemption is illumination. It is intellectual aspiration and re-orientation. It remains a matter of dispute as to whether Spinoza is speaking of knowing God as insight into Nature, or flight into transcendental experience of the divine. I opt for the former. He says, *the more we understand particular things, the more do we understand God (Ethics, 5.2)*. God and Nature are a single system. Love of nature and to know nature is to know God.
- 8.5.10 Since whatever is, is God, to understand the common properties of Nature is to understand God. Love is the most powerful of the emotions. It alone can most fully occupy the mind. Such passion, leading to true understanding, is a therapy. It is the remedy for the troubles of the soul. This is the true meaning of redemption.
- 8.5.11 The intellectual love of God for Spinoza is not flight of the soul toward a transcendental reality, but aspiration to know the secrets of Nature on the understanding that the terms God and Nature are interchangeable. Spinoza defines love as the lover's wish to unite himself to the loved object (*Ethics* 3, Definition 6). The impulse of such love is not union or fusion or identification of oneself with God or Nature. Neither is it purely desire or an act of the will. Rather it is the wish (defined as contentment) in the lover while in the presence of the beloved (Nature or God) to achieve true intuitive knowledge of God or Nature. At that point the ideas in our minds are identical with the ideas which make up the mind of God. This identity is the goal of the life of reason. Such a definition is consistent with a completely naturalistic definition of God, and appears to be identical with the passion for knowledge of any naturalistic philosopher or scientist without any reference to a transcendental spiritual reality or other-worldly contemplation.
- 8.5.12 The purest forms of Idealist philosophy which posits that Pure Being transcends the phenomenal universe are modern forms of Hinduism. During the early stages of contemporary interest in and pursuit of the Hindu transcendentalist ideal in America, Swami Nikhilananda defined its metaphysic in a lecture at Columbia University in New York as follows ("The Universe as Pure Being," *Man's Right to Knowledge*, 1954, pp. 69-76): Pure Being is free from limitations of past, present, and future, and is free from causal relationship. It must be admitted that the problem of the relationship between Pure Being and the phenomenal universe can never be solved, he says: *When Pure Being is contemplated, the universe disappears, and when the universe is seen, Pure Being is no longer there*, p. 72.

- 8.5.13 *Maya*, the product of sense perceptions, veils true reality and wrongly projects multiplicity. When one rids oneself of *Maya*, one sees the universe as Pure Unity. Monism is the philosophical justification of love because the command to love one's neighbor as one's self amounts to loving one's self because one's neighbor *is* one's self. Every soul is potentially divine. Thus insight into non-duality frees us from the polarizations of discreteness by our recognizing that Pure Being dwells in all, unaffected by the outer masks. Salvation comes through enlightenment. Thus sin and evil are illusions because what we call good and evil are manifestations of Pure Being. Discreteness and disparities are outward differences not true reality. Redemption comes through illumination. Harmonization through the philosophy of non-dualism would be a great boon to the world, he says. This perspective reduces personhood to an alleged higher trans-personal or non-personal abstraction. Ultimately, individuality must be overcome. This metaphysic is at total variance with the Christian concept of the infinite worth of persons, their moral responsibility as sinners, and the concept of the Cross as the act of loving divine condescension to deal with sin and guilt.
- 8.5.14 **Third**, love is not merely the path to self-realization. Modern secularization of Christianity has resulted in rejection of both the Idealism which posits love as God's way to the world and the Idealism which posits love as human aspiration for the sublime. It is now said that when properly demythologized the truth is that love is a dynamic of human existence and the term God may as well be dropped. Love is a way to ourselves. The words 'God is love' mean 'I feel loved', or 'I must love my neighbor', but not that God is personal and that he personally loves us. Love lends positive meaning to existence. John A. T. Robinson in his booklet *Honest to God* (1963), which became popular in those years, said that it is time to give up all notions of God as personal and to re-define God and his attributes in terms of our own experience. To believe that God is love is to believe in pure personal relationships, he said. Thus Jesus Christ is the paradigm of such a love and the Cross is demonstration of how far such love will go. That God is love is to be understood as a function of human existence and of human interpersonal relationships.
- 8.5.15 This perspective is based on the demythologizing approach of Rudolf Bultmann. His conclusions as to the existential nature of love are part of the theology of Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs. They argue that self-authenticating love moves us to ethical obedience. The words love and God are interchangeable, says Fuchs. Love is the sense of death to self (this is the meaning of Christ's Cross) in order to give life to others. Thereby God is in us and we are in God.
- 8.5.16 In light of demythologizing God as personal, modern skepticism as to the nature of the love of God quickly came to full circle. Paul van Buren (*The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, 1963, pp. 66-74), remarks that if 'God is love and loves me' really means 'I feel secure' or that 'I am a creature of ultimate value', then the latter assertions can operate quite effectively with the first one. For van Buren, 'I' has a cash value, but 'God' does not. Thus in our time the idea that God is love has died the death of a thousand qualifications along with the idea of God. The demythologizing enterprise ends by reducing God and the apostolic claims for his love in Jesus Christ to functions of enlightened human development. There is no longer any need, they say, to speak of God in personal terms or, for that matter, to speak of God at all.
- 8.5.17 The Biblical revelation that God is love means that God is neither trans-personal nor impersonal. It means as well that God and the truth that God is love cannot be reduced to functions of human experience and relationships. In *1 John* 4:8 God is presented as *the subject of the act of loving*, says C. H. Dodd (*The Johannine Epistles*, 1946, pp. 107, 109-110). As the living God his inmost nature is to love. We cannot be loved by an abstraction. Within the trinity love is the binding force. Love is not a function external to God's nature. It is not merely a dynamic in Nature (indeed, one could argue that Nature is 'red in tooth and claw'). Love is the essence of the divine nature. In the prayer attributed to Jesus in *John* 17:24, 26, he prays that his followers should finally

be with him, in his glory, *to behold my glory which Thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world*. The doctrine of the love of God coheres with the doctrine of the Trinity and with the truths that God sent his Son and that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

8.5.18 The correlatives of personhood and love are at the core of the Christian revelation and of the Gospel. Ultimate reality is of the nature of persons and personal relations. Hence, the Christian understanding of the creation is confirmed by our own experience of personal purposive activity, our understanding of providence from parental care, our understanding of Christ's condescension and Cross from sacrificial self-giving. The metaphysic of this matrix is that of persons. And the Bible discloses to us that the God who loves is personal. It beggars the imagination, and logic, to say what sort of reality transcends personhood.

8.5.19 What can be the meaning of love to a non-personal or trans-personal divinity defined as abstract Being or Being-itself? What can be the meaning of love to a uni-personal being? Has not modern secularization of love in terms primarily of need-satisfaction and biological gratification degraded humanity? The doctrine of God's love compels re-appraisal of and respect for the full Trinitarian language of the New Testament and the Church Fathers. Recovery of the beauty and moral quality of love in the Bible is overdue.

8.5.20 That God is love, that He loves us, and that the Incarnation signifies the condescending love of the eternal Son are known by revelation. The New Testament writers are saying to us, 'God has come among us in Jesus Christ', 'Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh'. While at first they were confused about his identity, partly because of the messianic expectations of the times, at the end they were compelled to confess *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*. In Christ prophecy had come full circle. Their testimony declares to us the truth of what was going on in the things that were happening in Palestine two thousand years ago. The truth of the divine intrusion into history is the personal coming of the eternal Son of God into the world.

8.5.21 The same applies to the historical event of the Cross. Paul declares, we thus judge, or we are convinced that if one died for all, therefore all have died (2 *Corinthians* 5:14). He means that in the death of Christ all died because Christ's death was properly theirs. He gives us the truth of what was going on in that event. There is, he says, an intimate connection between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sins (*Romans* 5:8-10). We are left with this fundamental truth: the Cross was God's Cross. It was not merely the unhappy ending of human resentment and judicial bungling. It was no accident. The Cross is God's gracious act of sacrifice to save sinful humanity and to redeem an evil-infected world. Thus the Cross does not win or secure or buy the love of God; it is, rather, the gift of that love.

8.5.22 Christ's sacrifice on the Cross signifies that love and holiness belong together. If the relation between God and humanity is mutually personal then in virtue of that fact it is also moral. Forsyth expressed this truth in an apt aphorism, *If He cares enough to be angry, He cares enough to redeem*. Love and holiness combine in redemption. God who justifies does so justly; he is, says Paul, both *just and justifier of them that believe in Jesus* (*Romans* 3:26). As the expression of the love of God the Cross is holiness in action. Love alone cannot forgive. Anyone who has forgiven knows the cost that must be borne. But love expressed in Christ's expiatory and propitiatory death can. God's love is holy love, not mere sentimentality. Christ's gracious self-humbling to the death of the Cross vindicates God's righteousness. Thus Paul can say (*Romans* 5:8), *God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*. It is as if Paul is quoting Jesus himself in *John* 3:16 - but are the words those of Jesus himself? Or, is their truth so integral to the New Testament statement of the Gospel that the apostolic statement may be deemed identical with what Christ said, what he accomplished, and what he



*accomplished, and the life of the world to come has been made not only a future hope but also a present reality.*

8.6.8 It is important to keep in view two questions which follow from Quick's interpretation: what does it mean to say that God in Christ suffers with and for humanity, and in what sense does the Son of God incarnate vanquish the powers of evil by means of the Cross?

8.6.9 Others developed a **sacramental** view of Christ's vicarious sacrifice. Austin Farrer, the Anglo-Catholic theologian and philosopher of religion at Oxford, wrote movingly in devotional terms about Christ's passion and the relationship of the Cross to the ills of the world (*Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited*, 1962; and *Saving Belief*, 1964). In the same tradition, Lionel Thornton (*The Common Life in the Body of Christ*, 1942) relates Christ's sacrifice to the inner life of the Church as Christ's body. Robert Paul (*The Atonement and the Sacraments*, 1960) relates the Cross specifically to Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

8.6.10 Renewed interest in the biblical theology of sacrifice generated a significant body of literature. I need mention only C. H. Dodd, T. W. Manson, his brother William Manson, A. M. Hunter and Donald Baillie, among many others. These stressed the **representative** character of Christ's death. Hunter says (*The Unity of the New Testament*, 1943, p. 102):

8.6.11 *The Atonement originates in the gracious will of God; it has to do with sin; its means is the crucified Christ whose death is vicarious, representative, and sacrificial; and the spiritual end which it secures is reconciliation or renewed fellowship with God based on a forgiveness of sins.*

#### 8.6.12 **The Concept of Sacrifice**

8.6.13 The *Book of Leviticus* records the prescribed sacrifices of Israel. The **Burnt Offering** (ch. 1) and **Meal Offering** (ch. 2) signify gift - probably the self-dedication of the offerer to God. The **Peace Offering** (ch. 3) signifies communion with God. The **Sin Offering** and the **Guilt Offering** (ch. 4 - 5:13) signify expiation, in the sense that the sin and guilt are covered in relation to penalty. The sacrifices are prescribed by God, they are made by human beings, and their significance is dedication to God, maintaining fellowship with God, and expiating sin. They have an objective reference. They are rites designed to deal with human sin against God and estrangement from God. There are likely also inherent elements of identification with the sacrifice, or transference of guilt to the sacrifice by pressing the hands on the victim.

8.6.14 The most important sacrifice in the Old Testament is the one performed on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), described in chapter 16. This is the sacrifice which is employed as the analogue of the sacrifice of Christ in *Hebrews* and referenced by Paul in *Romans* 3. *Yom Kippur* included two goats. One, the Scape-goat, was released alive into the wilderness, probably to signify the carrying away of sin into forgetfulness. The other was sacrificed. The use made of this ritual in *Hebrews*, combined with allusion to the rending of the veil in the Temple on the day Christ was crucified, is critical to proper understanding of the Christian doctrine of the Atonement.

8.6.15 On the Day of Atonement the High Priest first sprinkled blood for himself, then for the people, on the Mercy Seat in the Holiest Place of the Tabernacle, which was entered only once a year. *Hebrews* interprets this in relation to Christ's perfect, unrepeatably sacrifice. His blood is not sprinkled on the earthly Mercy Seat, but in the very presence of God. The torn veil is the tearing of his own flesh on the Cross as the opening of the way into God's presence in heaven. *Hebrews* is telling us that the Atonement has to do with God himself, which Paul also states in *Romans* 3:21-26. It is

something God does in relation to his own holiness. These aspects await study of the propitiatory and satisfaction elements in relation to righteousness; here we must focus on the vicarious element in relation to forgiveness.

8.6.16 It is critically important to understand that in respect of forgiveness sacrifice is a factor (a dynamic? an event?) in God himself. Anything said about sacrifice as self-dedication of the offerer can follow only from, and must be based solidly upon, this objective reality.

#### 8.6.17 **Christ's Death as Sacrifice**

8.6.18 It is in this sense that Christ's sacrifice is an offering (*prophora*). It is an offering within God himself on behalf of the world. It is not humanity's initiative to find a way to God. Paul draws the analogy between Christ's self-giving and our own (as a mark of discipleship, not as the way to become disciples), *as Christ loved us, and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice for God* (Ephesians 5:2).

8.6.19 Jesus relates his own sacrifice to this sacrificial tradition in Israel as one which inaugurates a New Covenant (*Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24*). His life was *poured out*, dedicated in death for our peace.

8.6.20 Paul assumes that his readers understand sacrifice to be vicarious. In addition to the *Ephesians* passage, one can cite his comment that Christ our passover was sacrificed for us (*1 Corinthians 5:7*), indicating that death passed over us as it did Israel in their deliverance from Egypt. *Hebrews* acknowledges the interim efficacy of the Old Testament sacrifices and then points away from their imperfections and limitations to Christ's final sacrifice. The hindering barrier of sin is removed by sacrifice and thereby the *conscience is purified*; which is to say that forgiveness becomes a moral reality (*Hebrews 9:9, 14*).

8.6.21 I acknowledge that this brief review of sacrifice does not do justice to the vast literature on the subject, historical, exegetical and expository. But I have sought faithfully to encapsulate traditional and recent findings in the foregoing summary. Without question, in the New Testament, and for Christians universally, it is agreed that in apostolic teaching Christ makes the perfect and final sacrifice for sin. In this respect, C. H. Dodd is surely correct when he states that one of the key connecting and cohering links between the Old Testament and the New Testament is the truth that the Suffering Servant of *Isaiah* chapter 53 is the Son of Man who gives his life a ransom for the many of *Mark 10:45*. This passage is pivotal,

*For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve,  
and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

8.6.22 It is fundamental to the teaching of the New Testament that a life was given in death for the sin of the world. There is a cost attached to forgiveness. The cost is the sacrifice of Christ. Its power is the dynamic of its vicariousness not only to bear the sin but also to renew the sinner: *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (*John 15:13*). The vicarious sacrifice of Christ does indeed relate judicially to the penalty meted out to sin. It does indeed relate regeneratively to life, renewing the spirit of altruism and self-giving in the heart of the penitent one. But in regard to sin the first function of vicarious sacrifice is to absorb the offense. Only then can forgiveness become reality.

#### 8.6.23 **The Mystery of Forgiveness**

8.6.24 Perhaps a key issue for moderns is less the correlation of Christ's sacrifice and forgiveness than the very concept of forgiveness which some regard as an irrelevancy. It

is a significant fact that in our naturalistically oriented age, in which it has been assumed that a biological and behavioral explanation can be given for all aberrant behavior, a more sympathetic eye is being turned to the relation between religion and mental health, including sin and guilt. A-morality contributes, but cannot cure, personality deviation and societal disorder. The person who, though wrongly, condemns himself even to the point of thinking that he has sinned unpardonably, is closer to spiritual recovery than the person who blames others or impersonal biological factors. Conversely, even if forgiveness is deemed to be a critically important spiritual reality, can we not assume if God is love that his forgiveness is a given without sacrifice, it is asked?

- 8.6.25 The inner destructiveness of unconfessed sin is dramatically described in the psychologically apt metaphors of *Psalms* 32:3-5,

*When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.  
For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer*

*I acknowledged my sin to Thee,  
and I did not hide my iniquity;  
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord';  
then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.*

- 8.6.26 What happens when one person forgives another? The way this question is framed pin-points the issue: it is something that happens between one person and another. Forgiveness in this sense is as much transactional as it is existential. But it is not merely a verbal transaction, like saying simply 'I forgive you.' By this I do not mean an economic transaction, but a moral one. I mean that something must happen between the one offended and the offender and that unless it happens in the one offended forgiveness cannot take place. Forgiveness entails far more than re-orienting the feelings of the offender to feel good about himself, or even merely re-orienting the feelings of the offended party.

- 8.6.27 Forgiveness is deeply interpersonal and moral, hence the difficulty of comprehending what forgiveness can mean if God is deemed to be impersonal or transpersonal. It then becomes merely inner psychological adjustment. Sin is not only transgression of a moral code, including a subjective one, it is also personal offense against God. Any sinner knows this about sin. David mourned the thought of his adultery (*Psalms* 51:3-4),

*I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me,  
Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned,  
and done this evil in thy sight.*

- 8.6.28 Forgiveness falls well within the range of human spiritual experience. The words Jesus uttered in the model prayer he taught draw a remarkable analogy between God's forgiving and our own: *forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us*. What happens in forgiveness? And why is God's forgiveness related specifically to the sufferings of Christ's cross? Paul says, *in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses* (*Ephesians* 1:8).

- 8.6.29 Here expiation and forgiveness connect. Something happens in the one who forgives. The forgiver redeems the situation. But it is not merely love saying 'I forgive freely.' It is love acting holily, otherwise forgiveness of sin jeopardizes God's holy law. Over a century ago, R. W. Dale remarked that remission imperils the sanctity of God's law unless he who remits suffers something in the penalty foregone. To what moral

reality in the one who forgives does this point as the foundation for the spiritual renewal forgiveness makes possible in the experience of the offender apply? Specifically, what role does the Cross have in this?

8.6.30 The answer to this has often been given in the history of the Church, but is quickly forgotten. Modern writers include R. W. Dale, P. T. Forsyth, James Denney and Leonard Hodgson. Fundamentally the issue concerns the nature of creation. God has given us freedom and in relation to the risk this entails (if we can so speak about the sinful abuse of freedom) he maintains his holiness by means of law and penalty. But God is not only the author of freedom, he becomes also the object of our actions and he by forgiveness soaks up, as it were, the force of our sinning. Indeed, the infinity of his love is the measure of his capacity to absorb our sins.

8.6.31 This epitomizes one side of the truth of the Scripture *that Christ died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3)*, or *that he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24)*, or *that for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21)*, or that he is *the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world (John 1:29)*. These texts have in view more than bearing penalty. They speak of bearing the sin itself. The capacity of a vicarious act to bear sin is the power to forgive. For forgiveness to take place sin must be borne.

8.6.32 We arrive at this fundamental biblical theorem: sin is forgiven as it is borne.

8.6.33 Implicit in the meaning of Christ's vicarious sufferings is the capacity of the one who lovingly condescends to enter into another's burden and to bear it. Forgiveness is always tragic and costly because forgiveness bears the wrong and absorbs the evil of the wrong. This is the objective side of forgiveness which comprises the basis for the subjective experience of being forgiven.

8.6.34 Nothing is spiritually higher or deeper in Christian faith than the assurance that through Christ's Cross one can be, indeed is, a forgiven sinner.

## 8.7.0 **The Cross and Deliverance: Redemption**

8.7.1 Like sacrifice, in the Bible redemption is one of the class concepts which identify the manner in which salvation is accomplished by God; so much so, that the term redemption becomes a stand-in for salvation, as in 'we are the redeemed of the Lord.'

### 8.7.2 **Deliverance or Ransom?**

8.7.3 The concept of redemption relates to the evil which plagues the world and the sinful condition of humanity. This condition is pictured as one of bondage from which humanity needs deliverance, or helplessness which calls for aid by another. In *Hosea 11:1* Egypt is a metaphor for bondage from which God delivered his son Israel (despite this the redeemed have since then turned to idols, God complains), but, ironically, in *Matthew 2:15* Egypt, the House of Bondage, becomes the place from which the Redeemer comes, having found protection there from his own.

8.7.4 Sinful condition as a slave-market from which humanity must be redeemed is another metaphor. Jesus speaks of the slavery which sin becomes (*John 8:34-36*) from which he, the Son, can free humanity. The Petrine epistles provide a running commentary on the theme by referring to sinfulness as moral enslavement (*2 Peter 2:19*) from which one can escape through the fulfilled promise of redemption (1:4). This extends the redemption theme of *1 Peter 1:18-19*.

8.7.5 Two key ideas as to the meaning of redemption have sometimes been juxtaposed: deliverance and ransom.

- 8.7.6 First, Israel's **deliverance** from Egypt was indeed redemption. Stephen's impassioned statement reflects the common understanding in Israel as he recounts God's promise to Moses to rescue his people from Egyptian bondage (*Acts* 7:34, note *Jude* 5). Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) became influential in the nineteenth century through his interpretation of redemption as deliverance; as God's initiative to rescue his people by his sovereign power, not by payment of a ransom. But if redemption means deliverance without ransom being paid, what becomes of the Cross?
- 8.7.7 Second, redemption commonly means rescue by payment of ransom, as in the traditional understanding of *Ephesians* 1:7, *redemption through his blood*. To this can even be added an aspect of the meaning of substitution, in the sense that Christ our substitute is the price paid for our redemption, though for the most part substitution concerns his bearing the judgment of sin in our place.
- 8.7.8 This view of redemption derives from the use of the term *lutron* for ransom by payment of price; and the cognates *apolutrosis*, signifying to ransom; and *antilutron*, which is used in the sense of a substitute-ransom, or counter-ransom. Fundamentally, these terms are used to signify setting someone free, with the implicit assumption that a price is paid for deliverance. In the cross-over of use and meaning from the Old Testament to the New Testament, the translation of Hebrew terms which signify ransom by payment of price is commonly done by means of the *lutron* group, as Leon Morris has shown to be the case in the *Septuagint* (*The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 1955).
- 8.7.9 'Redemption' by payment of price in the sense of a substitute is clear in the critically important passages Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 where 'in place of' is stated. The verbal form 'to redeem' equally strongly conveys the same meaning: *who gave himself for us to redeem us* (*Titus* 2:14, note also *Luke* 24:21). In *1 Peter* 1:18-19 the contrast between redemption being *not* by payment of silver and gold *but* by the blood of Christ dramatically reinforces the concept of redemption by payment of price. Thus references to Christ as the Redeemer which clearly mean Deliverer need to be understood in this light. That God redeems by means of foresight and mighty power and that Christ is the ransom-price of the deliverance are correlatives in the New Testament universe of meaning. This is evident from the reinforced form of the term (*apolutrosis*) where the blood of Christ is the ransom-price (*Romans* 3:24, *Ephesians* 1:7, *Colossians* 1:14, *Hebrews* 7:15) and in the statement that Christ himself is the ransom-price: who gave himself as a ransom for all (*1 Timothy* 2:6).
- 8.7.10 Redemption by purchase (*agorazo*) from the slave-market (*agora*) of sin adds weight to the foregoing. Paul declares you were bought with a price (*1 Corinthians* 6:20; 7:22-23), having in view the slave-market analogy. This parallels teaching in *1* and *2 Peter*, previously cited (8.7.4). The preposition *ex* is added to *agorazo* to reinforce the idea of 'being bought out of' or 'rescued from' in *Galatians* 3:13 where Paul says that Christ *redeemed us from the curse of the law*. The passage does not confuse or conflate the two ideas, they coinhere. They cap off what is meant in Christ's key kerugmatic statement that he has come to give his life as a ransom for many (*Mark* 10:45, *Matthew* 20:28).
- 8.7.11 **The Blood of Christ**
- 8.7.12 If the blood of Christ is the price paid what can be the meaning of this difficult term for redemption? Here, again, opinions contrast in a startling and unreconcilable way. Does the term blood stand for life or for death?
- 8.7.13 On the one side, a long list of prominent scholars can be cited who argue that blood does not mean life which is taken violently and sacrificially in a penal sense, but life which is voluntarily given up or released by death for our participation in it. The list

includes Nathaniel Mickleson, Vincent Taylor, Oliver Quick, C. H. Dodd, F. C. N. Hicks and A. M. Hunter. The root of the idea goes back in modern times a century ago to the work of B. F. Westcott and William Milligan. This view is based on Old Testament usage that *the life of the flesh is in the blood* (*Leviticus* 17:11) and that if the blood can be deemed to be uttering a message as it flows (*Genesis* 4:10) it cannot be dead, but is alive; alive with the life which flows from the body. In the case of murder the cry is for vengeance but in the case of the Cross the cry is an offer of life. The offer is for participation in Christ's life. Westcott says that blood stands for a life yielded in death in appropriate submission to the divine will, and that it binds our lives to itself to make possible our own parallel, but enabled, response of obedience (*The Epistles of St. John*, 1892, pp. 34-37) He adds:

8.7.14 *It could thus not be dead. It was alive. Not indeed that it was physically alive. It was rather ideally alive - alive with a life which confessed as it flowed forth in the blood, that it was surrendered freely in harmony with the demands of God's righteous law.*

8.7.15 This theological interpretation of the meaning of blood in relation to Christ's sacrifice is highly improbable. In both Testaments, blood in the veins signifies life, but when spilt violently it means death, calling for recompense. In the New Testament the term blood signified the death of Christ. It symbolizes all that the Cross means, but particularly the Cross as the judgment death for sin.

8.7.16 The many-sided meaning of the concept in the New Testament has been detailed by Alan Stibbs (*The Meaning of the Word 'Blood' in Scripture*, 1947). He lists nine significant uses, in relation to: propitiation, *Romans* 3:25; justification, *Romans* 5:9; ransom, *1 Peter* 1:18-19; reconciliation, *Ephesians* 2:13; reconciliation of all things, *Colossians* 1:19-20; atonement or expiation, *Hebrews* 9:7, 11-14, 22, 25; sanctification, *1 Peter* 1:2; covenant, *Hebrews* 13:20.

8.7.17 The shedding of blood signifies life taken violently, for which crime expiation can be only life for life, blood for blood. The theological significance of blood in relation to forgiveness stands in the vicarious nature of Christ's sacrifice, and in relation to atonement it stands in the penal element of the death of the Cross.

## 8.8.0 **The Cross and Atonement: Satisfaction**

### 8.8.1 **Propitiation or Expiation?**

8.8.2 Atonement is God providing propitiation of his wrath against sin by the expiation of sin sacrificially. A frontal attack has been mounted against this traditional understanding of atonement, first, that it is morally pagan and, second, that it is exegetically misguided. Can the traditional understanding be sustained and have its major features been misconstrued?

8.8.3 At the outset, it is critically important to note that forensic concepts such as penalty, satisfaction and acquittal do not stand alone. They are part of a universe of ideas. Deconstructing certain of them will in the nature of the case compel changes in the ways other key concepts in the matrix such as love, blood and representation, are understood. Thus distaste for, and rejection of, the concept of propitiation (misperceived as to its biblical sense, I believe) cannot occur in a corner. Such rejection necessarily impacts the ways other metaphors and images are understood. Satisfaction is generic to the biblical concept of sacrifice.

8.8.4 Atonement in the Bible is part of a system of ideas. One must not deconstruct theological terms at will to suit taste. This applies particularly to the word propitiation. Atonement is the teaching that by means of Christ's sacrificial death sin is expiated and guilt is removed, having in view the judgment of a righteous God against sin

(propitiation), the aim of which is to make God and sinners 'at-one'. That is, on moral grounds to reconcile two estranged parties, justly. Key concepts in this are guilt, judgment, reparation, propitiation, expiation. Can the guilty sinner be justified before God? Paul's fundamental question is, 'How can God both be just and justify the sinner?' (*Romans 3:26*).

8.8.5 Atonement deals with condemnation, guilt and alienation. The obverse of these is removal of condemnation by the gift of forgiveness based upon sin-bearing, the removal of guilt by the satisfaction of God and the reckoning of righteousness to the sinner's account, and the bridging of alienation through restoration of fellowship with God who has been propitiated. It is easy to see why some have construed this matrix to have pagan overtones. Nevertheless, I believe that this opinion misconstrues the data and therefore inevitably reaches wrong conclusions. The issue cannot be resolved by fine-tuning subtle differences between Christ being our representative, not our substitute, because the whole instinct of the Gospel is that he does something for us which we could not do for ourselves and that the idea of substitution cleaves indissolubly to what his representation of us before God can mean.

8.8.6 It is charged that propitiation is a pagan concept, in the sense that a deity is being appeased or bought off by a suppliant's offering. Dictionary definitions include the sense of (a) appeasement or conciliation in respect of wrath and (b) atonement or expiation in respect of the guilt of sin.

8.8.7 The modern claim is that theologically propitiation pits the wrath of God against his love. In the past this is done on ideological grounds, on the assumption that the traditional meaning of propitiation in the New Testament was correct, and that the concept must be rejected because it contradicts the meaning of unconditional love. Exponents thus were pitting themselves against traditional biblical understanding. However, in this century ideology appears to have been justified exegetically. It is now widely accepted that the 'propitiation' group in the New Testament (*hilasmos, hilaskesthai*) ought not to be translated propitiation but expiation. In other words, that on exegetical grounds the meaning is not turning aside wrath but expiation of sin. The foundation for this view was laid by C. H. Dodd in a widely influential 1931 article, reprinted in *The Bible and the Greeks*, 1935. Dodd's interpretation stands behind the displacement of 'propitiation' by 'expiation' in the RSV translation (*Romans 3:25, Hebrews 2:27, 1 John 2:2*);. The same occurs in the NEB. The NIV euphemistically renders *Romans 3:25* as *presented him as a sacrifice of atonement*, and *atonement sacrifice* in *1 John 2:2*. However, in a footnote to *Hebrews 2:17* the NIV adds the concept of turning aside wrath.

8.8.8 Dodd's conclusions appeared to cut the ground from under traditional orthodoxy by doing what they have traditionally prided themselves on: taking the text of the Bible seriously; exegetically. Add to this the non-penal meaning of Blood which I have already discussed, the slanting of substitution to mean representation, and traditional orthodoxy appeared to have been routed.

8.8.9 To begin with, no saccharine conception of the divine love can overcome the sharp taste of righteousness in the New Testament. Wrath must be understood not as anger which is anthropomorphically attributed to God, but as retributive response to sin by God on terms of his public righteousness. If the relations between God and humanity are personal then in the nature of the case they are moral. Punishment vindicates the creation of freedom.

8.8.10 Further, biblical propitiation is not pagan appeasement. R. W. Dale wrote the most widely circulated book on the Atonement in the English-speaking world during the nineteenth century (*The Atonement*, 1875), which was also translated into French and German. What he said then remains the truth of the matter (p. 162),

*Not a solitary instance can be alleged in which to propitiate, or any of its derivatives, when used in relation to the restoration of kindly relations between man and man, denotes that by which a change is produced in the disposition of a person who has committed an offense; it always refers to that which changes the disposition of the person who has been offended; and when used in relation to offenses against the Divine law, it always describes the means by which the sin was supposed to be covered in order that the divine forgiveness might be secured.*

8.8.11 Dodd's exegesis has been effectively challenged, nevertheless most theological writers who are not of the conservative theological traditions continue to employ his conclusions without qualification. Critics include Roger Nicole ('C. H. Dodd and the Doctrine of Propitiation', *The Westminster Theological Journal* 17.2, May 1955) and Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 1955. Their work concentrated on exceptions to Dodd's thesis, including usage in the Septuagint to which Dodd had devoted considerable attention. Others included E. K. Simpson, R. V. G. Tasker and essays in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, though in his essay on *hilaskomai* Johannes Herrmann relates propitiation to participation in Christ's life through its release in the blood. While it is acknowledged by most writers that propitiation has always been part of the meaning of the *hilasmos-hilasterion* group they instinctively swing interest to expiation. Despite this, one must insist that propitiation clings to the idea of expiation. Key references are *Hebrews* 2:17, *1 John* 2:2, 4:10; *Romans* 3:23 and *Hebrews* 9:5 in allusions to the Mercy-seat.

8.8.12 In what sense is Christ 'put forward' in *Romans* 3:25 as the propitiation for human sin? The Mercy-seat was the cover of the Ark of the Covenant where the High Priest once a year sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. Paul and the author of *Hebrews* are saying that Christ himself is that Mercy-seat, the blood is his own, and the altar is the very throne of God. The expiating of sin turns aside the righteous judgment of God. Expiation and propitiation are two sides of a single coin, and they cohere with the entire system of ideas which comprise the doctrine of Christ's work.

8.8.13 How can propitiation and expiation be understood in relation to God's holiness and love?

#### 8.8.14 **Righteousness and Judgment**

8.8.15 The law of God is not the vindictive expression of an angry deity who must be appeased by offerings brought by the offerer. It gives expression to the public, universal righteousness of God. It codifies, we might say, the normative morality which governs the interpersonal relations between God and the world, and of all personal relations. If a relationship is personal and loving, it is as well moral or it cannot be loving. Law and morality are of the essence of personhood. Thus the jealousy of God in the Bible has nothing to do with vindictiveness. It has everything to do with the true character of unrelenting love which acts holily. The law of God is not something which stands above or over against God, it is the expression of his very nature. God's law is not legalism; it is his righteousness.

8.8.16 Punishment is a condition of freedom, as well as a vindication of righteousness. While punishment may deter and in some cases it may even reform, these cannot comprise its moral justification. Indeed, if the sole justification of punishment is deterrence and reformation then it is fundamentally immoral. The morality of punishment rests squarely upon vindication of just law and appropriate retribution for wrongdoing. Deterrence and reform may be helpful by-products of punishment, but the *only* moral justification for punishment *qua* punishment is that it is deserved.

8.8.17 God preserves the conditions of the loving relations between himself and the world by law and punishment. That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself signifies that God's righteousness is not purely rectoral but that it is tinged by grace. What God demands he himself provides. The atonement, like forgiveness, is something that first happens within the triune life of God before it has any meaning for or bearing on humanity. To reject penalty for sin and in relation to the Work of Christ is to cut off our moral nose to spite our face.

8.8.18 **The Cross and Judgment**

8.8.19 The significance of the Work of Christ as Atonement can be grasped only in terms of a fundamental, but illuminating, paradox: that it is as true to say that God *sent* his Son into the world to die for the sins of humanity as it is true to say that God was *in* Christ reconciling the world to himself.

8.8.20 In what sense is the Cross the judgment-death for sin?

8.8.21 First, we should consider the intensity, measure or extent of judgment. How much is enough? The Christian Gospel says that in his death Christ expressed the truth of our relation to God (*the wages of sin is death, Romans 6:23*), without which any relation his act might have to us would be an incredible fiction. To put the matter in personal terms: *the death Christ died was my death and in that death I died*. This is Paul's point in *2 Corinthians 5:14*.

8.8.22 It is significant that deconstruction of propitiation usually results in Christ's death not being indispensable to redemption. But Christ's death is indispensable and is the key to his saving work. Note the entire passage, *2 Corinthians 5:14-21* and *Romans 5:20, 18-21*. We are reconciled by the death of the Son of God. From these passages, and passages such as *Galatians 3:13* we conclude three things: Christ died our death; by that death he bore the consequences of our sins; and, Christ on the Cross became the curse of the law against sin for us.

8.8.23 The judgment death of the Cross is commensurate with God's holiness. We are concerned in this not with arithmetically measured equivalent punishment but with due judgment of sin. In love, God the Son deals with humanity on God's part and with God on man's part. We know the measure of that judgment by revelation. God measures sin and God measures its judgment. And that measure is Calvary. The ancient prophet did not say that we are healed by ten stripes or twenty stripes, but that *by his stripes* we are healed.

8.8.24 The death of Christ is indispensable for redemption. In it what God demands he himself provides. He is both Judge and Victim. No outside agent propitiates God. Real understanding of the Atonement depends upon better understanding of the triune life of God. God himself, in love, provides the propitiation, the Mercy-seat, in the wounded flesh of the Eternal Son made incarnate. It is not a sacrifice made *to* God but *by* God in relation to his own righteousness.

8.8.25 Second, not only does the death of Christ express the truth of our relation to God as sinners, the mode of that death is the expression of a perfect Amen to God's holiness by the suffering Savior in the midst of judgment. This is the significance of Gethsemane in the Gospel narrative: *not my will but thine be done*, spoken with agony accompanied by sweat like great drops of blood falling to the ground (*Luke 22:44*). I find this to be a salient theme in *Hebrews*, especially the tenth chapter (note 10:10): Christ's mode of submission to the judgment-death of the Cross is something that we cannot do but into which we are taken up. Sinners are taken up into that divine Amen to the righteous judgment of God, into the quality of the act of obedience as well as the fact of

the self-offering. The writer of *Hebrews* says, *by the which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.*

8.8.26 Holy submission which is also vicarious submission becomes enabling submission to acknowledge the righteousness of God's judgment against sin. Christ is presented as the propitiation, or as propitiatory. Whether one uses the nominal or the adjectival form makes little difference to the core issue. The Atonement means that Christ has turned away the divine wrath by expiating sin. Christ himself is that Mercy-seat, that place of meeting, the place where 'at-one' becomes reality. We ought to read *Romans 3:25* as *whom God foreordained to be the Mercy-seat in his blood.*

8.8.27 Christ has absorbed the execution of the full judgment against sin, thus expiating sin, and bridging the gap of alienation between God and humanity. Wrath is passed over because it is satisfied. Love and propitiation consistently belong together: *in this is love ... loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:9-10; note also 2:2).* While Dodd's strictures compel care as to how we define propitiation, his case is overstated. In the New Testament propitiation concerns not human activity to propitiate God, but divine action in relation to human sin and guilt and the judgment-death of sin.

8.8.28 The loving, vicarious bearing of sin and judgment reveals holiness. In relation to humanity, Christ's submission was universal under the conditions of solitary judgment, Christ died for us and for the whole world, and because he died for all, every Christian can gratefully say, 'Jesus died for me.'

## 8.9.0 **The Cross and Reconciliation: Mediation**

### 8.9.1 **Christ the Mediator**

8.9.2 Is there a relationship between Christ and humanity in virtue of which anything he is or does has a bearing upon us beyond his influence as an ideal? Early in the history of the church it was recognized that Christ's relation to humanity is universal, otherwise any universally applicable salvific claim about him beyond imitation or ethical obedience is a fiction.

8.9.3 Christ the Mediator comes between God and humanity in order to effect reconciliation. While his mediation includes a prophetic role to interpret God and his will to humanity as was indicated in the Three-fold Office, it is primarily his High Priestly mediation that is in view here. Christ's mediatorship is directly stated: he is the one mediator between the one God and humanity (*1 Timothy 2:5*). He is the mediator of the New Covenant (*Hebrews 3:1, 7:21-24, 8:6, 9:15, 12:24*). His High Priestly mediation is unique and unrepeatable. It is not the mediation of the Aaronic priesthood's repeated sacrifices of unwilling victims. Nor is it advocacy even of a qualified interceding mediator. Rather, it is advocacy of a qualified mediator who is both High Priest and Victim, whose sacrifice will not and cannot be repeated again, and whose own blood makes final atonement for sin. This is his intercession.

8.9.4 By stressing the universality of 'one God,' Paul universalizes 'one mediator,' the man Christ Jesus; hence this passage has become axiomatic for Christians. Paul adds, *who gave himself a ransom for all.* In this passage the Apostle correlates priestly mediation, substitution (by use of the preposition *anti*, meaning 'in place of'), and reconciliation. Here again the Work of Christ is a universe of ideas: advocacy is not merely by nature and status. A particular status and qualifications are critically important, but the mediation takes place by means of unique sacrificial action. The finality of the action of the Mediator results in his perpetual mediatorial ministry for the redeemed at God's throne, and through the redeemed to the world at large (*John 17:9, 2 Corinthians 5:1-8-20, Hebrews 2:17-18, 4:15, 7:25, 9:24*). It follows that a central concept of the

Christian faith is priesthood as universalized witness by Christians to the fact and efficacy of Christ's unrepeatable reconciling sacrifice.

8.9.5 Irenaeus says that life and immortality have come to humanity through Christ because he attaches man to God by his own incarnation (*Against Heresies*, 5.1.1). Christ represents us because he entered into communion with us and *passed through every stage of life, restoring to all communion with God* (3.18.7). Christ *recapitulated in himself the long roll of humanity, furnishing us all with a summary salvation* (3.18.1); he *summed up in himself the ancient creation of the line of Adam* (5.1.2).

8.9.6 For the ancients, Christ's en-man-ment meant the deification of humanity - a phrase which must be handled with care. It means the restoration of humanity's original relation with God. Athanasius says, *he was made man that we might be made God* (*On the Incarnation*, 54). Christ sustains a generic and universal relationship to humanity, *by his death we all died in Christ, so again in himself we might be highly exalted* (*Against Arius*, 1.41).

8.9.7 Christ's generic relationship to humanity simply points to the truth of the interdependent nature of human personal life, biologically, socially, spiritually and, as well, morally. We may speak of the solidaric life of the race not in the sense of a Platonic trans-historical icon, but of the concrete historical bearing each human life has upon others. We cannot be personal in isolation. We are channels and agents to each other of either goodness or evil.

8.9.8 Christ is the light which lights every human being (*John* 1:9). The Incarnation means that the perfection of human life actually takes this form, namely, interdependence or co-inherence. Christ exhibits the true, intended relation of humanity to God. His relationship to the Father exhibits the possibility of ours. He is the life or root of the race. In him, the Logos, upon whom every person depends for life, we are brought into direct personal relation with God.

#### 8.9.9 **Christ the Reconciler**

8.9.10 Christ identifies himself with us. The writer of *Hebrews* says that just as we partake of flesh and blood, he partook of the same, so that through death he might destroy the power of death (2:14-15). To accomplish such a redemption it *behoved him to be made like unto his brethren* (2:17), thereby qualifying him to become our High Priest before God. In his compassion he makes perfect confession of holiness. His mediation has eternal and universal validity (*Hebrews* 9:12, 26, 28). Christ renewed humanity generically in his own obedience, which makes our obedient response possible.

8.9.11 While Christ's mediatorial and reconciling work have, at times, been overshadowed by the concept of the atoning sacrifice, especially in Protestant Theology, they properly belong together. Reconciliation is grounded in atonement. The Apostle Paul devotes considerable attention to this confluence of concepts in *Romans* 5:6-11, *2 Corinthians* 5:11-21 and *Ephesians* 2:11-22. Reconciliation to God, to one another and reconciliation of all things are seminal ideas in Paul's writings (*Ephesians* 2:16, *Colossians* 1:20, *1 Corinthians* 7:11) which follow the dominical injunction, as in *Matthew* 5:24.

8.9.12 Misunderstanding has resulted from terminological confusion. Modern translators now uniformly correct 'atonement' in the AV of *Romans* 5:11 to properly read 'reconciliation;' however, the RSV oddly existentializes the rendering to say 'received *our* reconciliation' whereas it should be rendered 'received *the* reconciliation' - a reference to the objectivity of the atonement as the basis of reconciliation. Such subtle distinctions define the issue between those who say that reconciliation is primarily response to love

and those who insist, as I do, that reconciliation has its moral footing on atonement for sin. Does *the reconciliation* identify a corporate, cosmic event, or does it refer only to the personal side of the restoration of one person to another? Both are true, I think, but the latter depends upon the former. To this can be added the confusion caused by the AV rendering of *hilaskesthai* (propitiation) in *Hebrews 2:17* as reconciliation which the RSV, following Dodd's thesis, translates as expiation.

8.9.13 Reconciliation depends upon forgiveness. The damage done by sin is objective. Forgiveness which leads to reconciliation is costly. Forgiveness depends upon vicarious absorption or bearing of the evil. Bearing the evil involves the sacrifice of the Cross in which the just judgment of sin is lovingly and submissively accepted. This is the objective ground of the subjective response in reconciliation. In forgiveness nothing is so severe and just as love.

8.9.14 The family of terms employed signifies an exchange or, more appropriately to the doctrine of the Work of Christ, a change from alienation to friendship. Key passages are: *Katallage* in *Romans 5:11; 11:15; 2 Corinthians 5:19*. *Katallasso* in *Romans 5:10; 1 Corinthians 7:11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20*. *Apokatallasso* in *Ephesians 2:16* and *Colossians 1:20, 22*. *Diallasso* in *Matthew 5:24*.

8.9.15 In the *2 Corinthians* passage, Paul pleads passionately for Christian commitment to the ministry of reconciliation (5:18-20). This is based upon the substitutionary death due to sinners in which our own death was borne (5:14, 21).

8.9.16 *Romans 5* declares the reconciliation to be an objective reality, specifically related to Christ's death (5:7-10). In this passage, penalty (died, wrath, blood), substitution (for us), restoration (enemies, reconciled) belong together. They comprise a coherent universe of theological discourse.

8.9.17 The *Ephesians 2* passage relates reconciliation to God with reconciliation between people (Jews and Gentiles) who are alienated from one another. The reconciliation Christ accomplished unites them in a new community of faith, hope and love. Christ the Reconciler is the agent of peace. In place of ethnic and religious splintering there is created one new humanity (2:15), joined together in the body of Christ as a single, universal household of faith (2:19-22).

8.9.18 **Christ the Sanctifier**

8.9.19 As the New Head of the New Humanity, Christ exhibits the original relation of humanity to God. His obedience has a universal character. In the power of his perfect acceptance of and submission to the will of the Father, we accept and submit. The power of evil is thereby exhausted in the death to sin, in the confession of God's holiness, and in the holy commitment of a self wholly dedicated to God.

8.9.20 Christ's continuing mediation is the guarantee of righteousness in us. Thereby the purpose of true freedom is vindicated. Christ in himself is the justification of the ways of God with humanity. In Christ God's purpose to create free good persons who will self-consciously share his fellowship and work is brought to fruition.

8.9.21 The work of Christ in relation to our sanctification is the climax of Christ's mediatorial act. God's law becomes engraved on the heart. The mode of his willing submission becomes the dynamic of ours. The *Hebrews* passage leads to the confluence of redemption and sanctification (10:14) *because by one sacrifice he has perfected forever those who are being made holy* (NIV).

8.10.0 **The Cross and Triumph: Victory**

8.10.1                    **The Cross as Victory**

8.10.2                    In the New Testament the Cross is presented as a triumph. How can one who is hanging helplessly upon an executioner's gibbet be deemed to have won a victory? There is a second-century graffito on the wall of a cave in the Near East which depicts the body of a man on a Cross. Beneath is a crudely drawn kneeling worshipper and underneath him are scratched the words, *Alexander is worshipping his god*. But on the shoulders of the crucified figure is drawn the the head of an ass. This reflects the scorn heaped on the early Christians as the Christian faith hesitantly made its way into the pagan world. How can any rational person think that a man crucified as a common criminal can do anything for anyone else?

8.10.3                    Christ is hailed in the New Testament as the coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords (*1 Timothy* 6:15; *Revelation* 17:14; 13:16). It is significant to New Testament writers to report his royal lineage (note also *Matthew* 2:2) to which Nathaniel's exclamation is a parallel (*John* 1:49). The taunts of his detractors at the foot of the Cross satirically epitomize the faith of his followers (*Matthew* 27:11, 37, 42).

8.10.4                    That mockery, cruelly symbolized by the crown of thorns, forces the question upon us: Why is it not enough to say that Jesus is enthroned in the hearts of his people as Christ and Lord? How can the death of the Cross itself be (improbably) understood as a triumph? Paul declares that in virtue of his passion and death Christ is exalted with a name above every name (*Philippians* 2:9-10) and that Christ by his passion on the Cross disarmed and triumphed over principalities and powers (*Colossians* 2:14-15), making a public example of them in doing so. Similarly, *Revelation* 17:14 speaks of the Lamb that triumphs - the Lamb that had been slain (note also *1 Peter* 1:19, *Revelation* 5:12).

8.10.5                    In what sense was his passion a public triumph over the powers of evil? His passion was not a regrettable stepping stone to well-deserved royal recognition. Christ's passion is itself a victory, a moral victory of awesome proportions and of immense significance cosmically, having a direct bearing on the meaning of both divine and human forgiveness.

8.10.6                    Readers of the Early and Later Church Fathers know that the theme of Christ the Victor was common coinage among Christians in ancient times. It is alleged that in later centuries the concept was largely lost to the church. Gustaf Aulen (*Christus Victor*, 1931) and J. S. Whale (*Victor and Victim*, 1960) sought to redress what they thought was an imbalance. Nevertheless, I believe that their understanding of the nature of Christ's victory misses the central point of it.

8.10.7                    Ignatius, who died about 115 C.E., says that as one of three central mysteries of the faith the Cross is part of God's plan to abolish death and vanquish the old Kingdom (of Satan): there occurred the destruction of the Kingdom of Evil by the manifestation of God in Christ (*Epistle to the Ephesians*, 19). Implicit in this is the triumph of good over evil. The Cross expresses the true power of omnipotence. Christ's death mediates the abolition of death.

8.10.8                    Irenaeus develops the same theme: Christ recapitulates mankind and God in man defeats the Devil. His insight is, I believe that of a genius: the dominion Satan had over us from the beginning was broken not by violence (kingship by force) but by means of persuasion. The Cross neither infringed on justice nor allowed God's handiwork to go to destruction; i.e., that as an act of perfidy and intended wickedness the power of evil should finally triumph by means of the Cross, *Against Heresies* 3.18.7. Rather, God recapitulated man in himself that he might *kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man*. For Irenaeus, this is a moral triumph, in which Christ's obedience is a central component (3.18.1-2; 4.14.1; 5.16.1-3 - 5.17.1). He says, that *the coming of the serpent is conquered by the harmlessness of the dove, those bonds being unloosed by which we had*

*been fast bound to death* (5.19.1; 5.21.1). He contrasts the vanquished man and the victorious man: that as through a man death waved the palm branch of victory against humanity, so again by a man we may wave the palm branch of victory against death. That victory is Christ's obedience, into which he takes up our obedience: *In the second Adam we were reconciled, becoming obedient unto death* (5.21.2).

- 8.10.9 Failure to grasp the truth of what the Church Fathers such as Irenaeus were saying has led to disparagement of an apt metaphor, which some think grotesque. In his discussion of Christ's Work, Gregory of Nyssa (c.330 - c.395 C.E.) first proposes an axiom: no arbitrary method of the rescue of humanity from the Devil will do, but one consistent with justice (*The Great Catechism*, ch.. 22). The Devil's attack on Christ in his temptation and passion was like a fish gulping down bait (the flesh of Christ) but the flesh merely masked the hook of the divinity. Christ's perfect obedience comprised the triumph over the Evil One (ch.24). The metaphor is a curious one, perhaps based upon *Job* 45:1:1, but Gregory's meaning is clear. Christ's victory was a moral triumph - the triumph of uncorrupted perfect obedience by divinely recapitulated humanity.
- 8.10.10 Similarly, Gregory of Nazianzus (c.329 - c.379 C.E.) explodes the myth of a ransom being paid to the Devil. We were indeed detained in bondage by the Evil One, sold under sin. To whom was the ransom offered, he asks? If to the Evil One fie upon the outrage, he replies (Oration 45, *Second Oration on Easter*, 22) It is a moral triumph on behalf of humanity. He says, He makes my disobedience his own as head of the whole body and by his submission he brings us to God (Oration 4, *The Second on the Son*, 5), which he movingly describes in his panegyric on Christ's passion (Oration 37, *On the Words of the Gospel*, 4).
- 8.10.11 Modern interpreters like Aulen and Whale have deconstructed the concept of the Cross as victory. For them it becomes a symbol of the triumph of grace over law. Aulen correlates the evil forces with the Law as Legalism. This not only distorts the meaning of Christ's victory, it distorts the concept of God's law. One cannot justify an agapaic version of the Work of Christ by the artifice of reducing the Law (which stands for God's righteousness) to Legalism.
- 8.10.12 The Classic Type (Aulen's designation for the Victor Theme in the Fathers) shows a continuity of the divine operation (as an exhibition of love) and discontinuity in respect of merit and justice, he says. He contrasts the Latin Type (the forensic view of Anselm and the Reformers) in both respects. But, discontinuity between the significance of the Cross and Moral order is, I think, fatal to the doctrine of the work of Christ and is not what the Church Fathers had in mind. Deconstructing Law as myth is not any more helpful to our understanding than was the ancient myth of ransom to the Devil.
- 8.10.13 On this, J. McLeod Campbell, banished by the Church of Scotland, is correct, whatever merit may be accorded to other theological charges against him. He speaks of the vicarious confession of sin by Christ under the conditions of holiness and judgment (*The Nature of the Atonement*, 1856, p. 26-27). This must not be understood as denying substitution or atonement; rather, of identifying the form of Christ's obedience, as the obedient sacrificial victim who celebrates the holy love of God which judges sin. Forgiveness of sin depends upon vindication of God's righteousness.
- 8.10.14 Campbell found this in Luther, especially in Luther's comments on *Galatians* 3:13. His rendering of Luther is more credible than attempts to deconstruct the Law, as Whale does, into the myth of Mr. Legality and then to retreat into 'trans-historical significance' as to the meaning of the Cross. The Fathers grappled with real history. What does Christ's passion, as actual suffering, mean? To say that it is merely symbolic fails to meet the test of the Scriptures that the Passion itself is in some sense a triumph. Under no conditions can the mythologizing of these historical realities carry the meaning

embedded in the passion mysticism of all ages of Church literature. One must be wary of such sweeping reconstruction of Christian understanding and instinct.

8.10.15               What did Luther say? Much more than what he is famous for, that Christ became the curse of the Law for us when he bore our sins. He bore our sins in a particular way. He identified himself with us and us with himself *in respect of righteousness*. It is righteousness triumphing over sin; it is loving submission under the conditions of holy judgment.

8.10.16               In his *Commentary on Galatians* (3:13), Luther refuses to let the issue of Christ's passion go. He struggles with how the monsters of sin, death and the curse could be overcome and destroyed. This is something more than that Christ became a curse for us. What does Paul mean when he says that Christ triumphed over principalities and powers *by his passion* (*Colossians* 2:15)?

8.10.17               Luther replies that the triumph could only take place *in himself* (Christ). It is the triumph of the sin-free Christ who cannot be corrupted by evil. Christ has *vanquished and killed the same in his own body*. It is important to quote Luther's conclusion in its entirety:

8.10.18               *But now let us see by what means these two things so contrary and so repugnant may be reconciled in this one person. Not only my sins and yours, but also the sins of the whole world, either past, present, or to come, take hold upon him, go about to condemn him, and do indeed condemn him. But because in the self-same person, which is the highest, the greatest and only sinner, there is also an everlasting and invincible righteousness: therefore these two do encounter together, the highest, the greatest and the only sin, and the highest, the greatest and the only righteousness. Here one of them must needs be overcome and give place to the other, seeing they fight together with so great force and power. The sin therefore of the whole world attacks righteousness with all might and main. What happens in this contest? Righteousness is everlasting, immortal and invincible. Sin also is a most mighty and cruel tyrant, ruling and reigning over the whole world, subduing and bringing all men into bondage. To conclude: sin is a mighty and a strong god, which devours all mankind, learned, unlearned, holy, mighty and wise men, etc. This tyrant, I say, flies upon Christ and will needs swallow him up, as he does all others. But he does not see that he is a person of invincible and everlasting righteousness. Therefore in this combat sin must needs be vanquished and killed, and righteousness must overcome, and reign. So in Christ all sin is vanquished, killed and buried, and righteousness remains a conqueror and reigns forever.*

8.10.19               Luther's metaphor of sin attempting to devour Christ but being frustrated by his sinlessness is strikingly parallel to Gregory of Nyssa's metaphor of the ravenous fish impaled on the hook of the divinity when snatching at the bait of the humanity.

8.10.20               The triumph is of good as good over evil as evil, of an eternal Amen to holiness in the judgment death of the Cross. Thereby sin is absorbed: *by his stripes we are healed*. The objective ground of the reconciliation is thereby established once for all.

#### 8.10.21               **The Theology of Victory**

8.10.22               We can now comprehend more fully what Paul means when, in the midst of a context filled with substitutionary and atonement language, he says that having been justified by Christ's blood, *we shall be saved by his life* (*Romans* 5:10). This is far from being merely ethically exemplarist; it is morally recapitulationist. In a parallel comment, the writer of Hebrews says that it is by the submissive will of Christ that we are sanctified, *once for all* (*Hebrews* 10:10). He has taken up our obedience and submission into his own. This moral triumph is the significance of the bait-on-a-hook metaphor regarding Christ's humanity in Gregory of Nyssa.

- 8.10.23 Three things follow:
- 8.10.24 **First**, the triumph marks the destruction of evil and the vindication of goodness, actually in history as well as in principle. The power of evil was shattered in Christ's sinlessness and obedient response. The victory was his inviolable moral perfection. Thus Jesus could say, actually not merely proleptically, *Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world* (John 16:33). Nothing highlights this victory more than Christ's words in the night of his betrayal, *The Prince of this world comes but has nothing in me*. That is, there is nothing in me to which he can attach himself, Jesus is saying. In the Garden he prays, *My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done* (Matthew 26:42). And he drank it - to the dregs.
- 8.10.25 Christ's obedience robbed evil of its power to corrupt and brought the possibility of duplicating that victory in humanity: the power of a vicarious act to bear the evil uncorrupted, to absorb it, and to forgive. This released a new moral force into the world.
- 8.10.26 In the New Testament this truth is expressed in many ways; ways which compel making a distinction between suffering *for* Christ and suffering *with* Christ. The term which identifies the latter cannot be made more forceful (*sumpaschomen* in Romans 8:17): it means to suffer in a manner which is analogous to Christ's own unrepeatable sacrifice.
- 8.10.27 Christ warned his disciples that they could indeed drink of his cup and be baptized with his baptism (of death), Matthew 20:22-23. Peter speaks of partaking of Christ's sufferings, 1 Peter 4:12-13. Paul talks about making up in his own sufferings that which is lacking in Christ's, Colossians 1:24. How can Christ's sacrifice be said to be both perfect and unrepeatable yet fulfilled in some further manner? There is the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, Philippians 3:10, and the bearing about in the body the dying of Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:10. In short, evil is triumphed over just as sin is forgiven, namely, by being borne. Thereby its energy is absorbed and transformed from power to work evil to power to do good.
- 8.10.28 **Second**, the world is placed on a new footing because of the satisfaction of God. This is *the* reconciliation. Personal relations with God have been reconstituted. There is now *no more condemnation*, (Romans 8:1). A world-interest of redemption has been achieved and therefore the Gospel as Good News can be preached. We can re-construct our universe around Christ as Paul puts it (Ephesians 1:11; 3:11; Colossians 1:16-17). In Christ, freedom has been realized and vindicated.
- 8.10.29 **Third**, the triumph of the Cross stands in the realization of goodness. This is the sanctification of humanity in its recapitulation in Christ; or, as Forsyth put it, the redintegration of humanity in Christ. Christ realized the ideal of free obedience to righteousness. Henceforth Christians can say that they,
- have overcome the evil one ... you are strong and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one ... little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world, (1 John 2:13-15; 4:4).*
- 8.10.30 P. T. Forsyth summarized Christ's victory as follows in *The Work of Christ*, 1910, pp. 201-202:
- This one action of the Holy Saviour's total person was, on its various sides, the destruction of evil, the satisfaction of God, and the sanctification of men. And it is in this medium of holiness ... that these three effects pass and play into each other with a spiritual interpretation.*

8.10.31 I add a comment which Leonard Hodgson often made to me, which epitomizes the whole issue of Christ's triumph: *What evil does depends upon how it is taken*. It can corrupt one's inner being so as to spread evil by widening rings of sin, violence and suffering. Or, evil can be redemptively, sacrificially absorbed. That is the moral reality of Christ's work alongside the forensic truths of his penal, substitutionary, atoning death. The triumph of Christ's passion is a moral reality not a deconstructed myth. To suffer with Christ means to absorb evil as God's redemptive agents.

8.11.0 **The Cross and Human Response: Faith**

8.11.1 Nicea settled for the Church that the history recorded in the Gospels is real and that it is a necessary component of the Christian message. Modern existentialists are little different from ancient Gnostics if the historical Jesus is not essential to authentic Christianity. If this is true about Christianity in principle, in what ways does the historical reality of the Cross relate to the kerugma and personal discipleship? The kerugma calls not merely for response to a generalized theistic impulse, nor even to faith in God as Creator and Sustainer, as important as these may be, but for faith in the God and Father of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and in him crucified and risen from the dead. It is not for me to judge of how much faith, or how much content in faith, amounts to saving faith. It is enough for me to leave limitations of knowledge, frailties of understanding, and opaqueness of cultural blinkers to the grace and providence of God. I live in hope that the objective character of Christ's atoning work furnishes grounds for believing that his intercession takes up into itself the halting, uncertain cries of the human heart, of those who call out from the depths of their moral need, as the Apostle Peter, full of wonder, said as he pondered the miracle of a Gentile household seeking the way of the Lord, *Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him* (Acts 10:34). I leave that mystery for further study, certain that the fuller answer awaits another life. Nevertheless, the Gospel is rooted in history, in a particular historical context, and it is addressed to people in other particular historical contexts centuries removed from Jesus' day. This is the message committed to us and the mystery of how God will finally deal with human beings in eternity must not deter us from asking how the Cross bears upon us today, nor serve as an excuse to spend our time splitting theological hairs rather than proclaiming God's saving action in the Cross. The Cross has a message: *Be reconciled to God...*

8.11.2 The doctrines of creation and redemption are built upon the foundation of the truth that it is not beyond the ability or power, nor beneath the dignity, of God to involve himself in history, concretely, specifically. The Cross is not merely an event of faith, it is an event interpreted by faith. The New Testament writers are saying, *this is what the Cross means ...* Event and interpretation belong together. The truth about the event is that *Christ died for our sins* (1 Corinthians 15:3). Each word of that brief five word sentence bears individual, extended exposition. The objectivity of God's action in the Cross, and the significance of that action within the very nature of God, precedes all human response, but it makes possible that response as more than 'this is how I feel about the Cross'.

8.11.3 James Denney wrote (*The Death of Christ*, 1902, p.145) that the work of reconciliation is a work,

8.11.4 *which we must conceive to be finished, before the Gospel is preached. It is the good tidings of the Gospel, with which the evangelists go forth, that God has wrought in Christ a work of reconciliation which avails for no less than the world, and of which the whole world may have the benefit. The summons of the evangelist is 'Receive the reconciliation, consent that it become effective in your case.' The work of reconciliation is not a work wrought upon the souls of men, though it is a work wrought in their interest, and bearing so directly upon them that we can say God has reconciled the world to himself.*

- 8.11.5 The cause is before the effect. P. T. Forsyth addressed the tendency to existentialize the Cross religiously apart from its objective reality and truth in his Yale lectures in 1907 (*Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*, 1909, p. 178),
- 8.11.6 *So long as the chief value of the Cross is its value for men, so long as its first effect is upon man and not upon God, so long as its prime action is not upon reality but upon our feeling about reality, then so long shall we be led away from direct contact with reality at our religious center ... To regain our spiritual reality and its moral tone we must go back from our subjective experience, not only to the objectivity of an historic Cross, but to a central action within his (God's) own nature.*
- 8.11.7 The fundamental Christian vocation of theologians, preachers and dedicated lay persons is not that of theological cowboys who set about to rope theological ideas into ideological corrals; rather, our task is to attest to the apostolically interpreted fact that Christ died for our sins and to call for believing response. The meaning of the Cross is not merely an exercise in logic; it is a vital spiritual datum.
- 8.11.8 No verbal cure for evil and sin can suffice, nor can any solution that does not take seriously the predicament of sinful humanity under God's judgment. As the act of God, the Work of Christ stands in logical relation to the Incarnation (which is how Christ's work is relevant to us) and to the Trinity (which is the life to which we are called). We must accept and comprehend, therefore, the twin truths that God sent his Son and that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. These twin truths are what the Biblical metaphors and images declare. As insights generated by the truth each part contributes to the unity of the whole. And that whole comprises the action of the holy love of God. Certainly it is true that Christ sacrificed himself for us, that he died the death of sin, that he made satisfaction for sin and expiated it, that he was the propitiation for sin, that he died as the substitute for sinners and as the representative of the human race, that his blood is the precious ransom-price of our salvation that seals the covenant of grace. We need to comprehend these concepts in their bearing on the life of the triune God and upon the race. But the fundamental message of the Cross is simple.
- 8.11.9 The event of the Cross and the truth about the Cross are not dead historical data. Like absolute moral values, the truth endures, vital, with staying power. What happened there and then impinges upon life here and now. And what did, in fact, happen? When Paul says *we thus judge* (2 Corinthians 5:14), he means to tell us what was going on in the things that were happening. The Cross was not an effective way of getting rid of a troublesome meddler, as the Chief Priests and Elders of the day thought. Nor was it merely a judicial expedient, a bit of judicial juggling, as Pilate the Roman Procurator thought. Nor, again, was it the end of their world as Jesus' disciples thought as they began to disperse after the horror of the crucifixion. Rather, it was the death of the Son of God for the sins of the world. This objective reality calls for, and is designed to enable, subjective response.
- 8.11.10 James Denney says that God does not win our response by calculating what may win us, *but by acting in consistency with himself, God irresistibly appeals to men* (*The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, 1903, p. 92). The Work of Christ is able to create the response it was intended for. Its subjective power is greatest when its objective reality is most present to the mind.
- 8.11.11 Is the work of an artist passive, or does that which the artist puts into it create in us in part the feeling or understanding which he has so that we can appreciate it? I appreciate the poetry of T. S. Eliot, but am opaque to the genius of Picasso. But in the Cross God has done something which has universal appeal, unless we are totally morally opaque. That something reaches inside the community of moral life, into the human condition of personal sin and personal guilt, of responsibility and judgment, of penitence and longing for healing. There dawns realization that what happened on the Cross was

*for me.* If conscience is open there comes awareness of correspondence to need. The Cross appeals to all that is in us which says that we are not what we should be, or could be, but want to be; but first and foremost to be rid of guilt which cannot be cured by blaming our genes or others. The Cross takes up into itself all our pollution, weakness and guilt. It is like a suit made to order, not to mask the embarrassing, unsightly parts, but to clothe the forgiven sinner in a white robe because the Savior has dealt with the moral blemishes. The Cross creates capacity to respond in souls almost too far gone to feel it. This is the power of the truth that *God so loved that he gave ... and of I, if I be lifted up, will draw all to me...*

8.11.12

Happy is the person who allows the moral realities of Christ's work on the Cross to impinge upon life. That person is hard indeed whose heart weeps no tears of penitence whenever the account of Christ's passion is read - and in an age which focuses on self-fulfillment it is read all too infrequently - for the power of this Gospel breaks sin's power and sets men and women free. The finished work of Christ is replete with moral appeal. Let us stand before that Cross, wondering at the spectacle, rejoicing in its simplicity, amazed that Christ died for our sins, but ready to move from sweeping generalizations to murmur *Jesus died for me.*

8.12.0

### **Postscript: P. T. Forsyth on the Work of Christ**

Some years ago, following a research project on the Work of Christ involving several theologians, I summarized key concepts of P. T. Forsyth's theology. His style is aphoristic, which discourages some readers, but his theology of the Work of Christ, scattered throughout his voluminous writings, comprises a coherent whole. His influence has been significant in this century, including upon Emil Brunner who used to hear Forsyth preach when Brunner, as a young man, spent two years in London before studying theology. Forsyth is important because his work marks a *theological* turning point against the prevailing Liberalism of the early twentieth century, before Karl Barth and Emil Brunner reacted against the humanism of Liberal Theology, and before the rise of the new Biblical Theology studies, especially in Britain from the late nineteenth-twenties onward. My outline of the structure of his views follows:

1. We must go beyond the mere cataloguing of texts; rather, we should begin with the actual moral situation and the revelation of redemption.
2. We have outgrown the idea that God has to be reconciled by a means exterior to himself. The satisfaction of Christ flowed from the grace of God; it did not procure it.
3. Christ did not deflect the divine anger in the sense that its lash fell on him while we had neither part nor lot in the matter.
4. Nothing so subjective as the Christian consciousness can be the test of truth here; our forgiveness must have an objective ground in the Death of Christ construed as more than the source of a new type of experience.
5. The Atonement is not the mollification of God nor an inducement offered by man or a third party; what was historically offered to God was eternally offered by God.
6. We must abandon the idea that the Atonement cost the Father nothing, because the Son could not suffer without the Father suffering. Forgiveness costs.
7. Christ did not take our punishment in the quantitative sense. What fell on him was not the equivalent punishment of sin but its due condemnation.
8. Nor is it the sufferings per se that atone, but the obedience.

9. The penalty inflicted on sin was not arbitrary but commensurate with the holiness of God.

10. No ledger transfer of guilt to Christ was involved.

11. The term penalty must be rightly though cautiously employed of the burden Christ bore for sin; but we must renounce the idea that he was punished by the God who was ever well-pleased with his beloved Son.

12. It is not the case that forgiveness cost so much that it was impossible till justice was appeased and mercy set free by the blood of Christ.

13. Love cannot forgive arbitrarily with no regard to the holiness of God: there are conditions to be met which reside, not in man, but in the very nature of God himself.

14. Satisfaction was made neither to the wounded honour nor to the punitive justice of God; it lay in Christ's obedience: there is a vast difference between suffering as a condition of Atonement and suffering as the thing of positive worth in it.

15. Christ's obedience in life and death stand together for his redeeming work; he was obedient not simply in but unto death.

16. Scripture must speak for itself; for example, on justification Paul does not mean making but declaring just. On that point he uses forensic terms - his meaning is clear whatever readers may say of his authority.

17. Expiation and forgiveness are not mutually exclusive; but the suffering was not quantitative. It is the kind, not the amount, of penalty that is in view.

18. What is significant is not the experience (for Christ) but the act of Christ in both judging sin and confessing holiness.

19. Christ's Cross is not merely the prerequisite or condition of reconciliation but the accomplishment of it in principle. The same act both disburdens us of guilt and commits us to new life.

20. Christ did not bear our guilt in the sense of a vicarious repentance for he had no guilt to confess.

21. The self-salvation of Liberalism must be abandoned in favour of the Atonement's centrality. The communion between God and man is breached - so that is the problem. The hostility must be overcome. Man is incapable of atoning for himself. If we could satisfy the moral order we disturbed, our insufferable self-satisfaction would derange it straightway.

# **CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP**

Samuel J. Mikolaski

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## 9.0.0 Invitation to Christian Faith: Then and Now

9.0.1 Christian faith and discipleship quickly became a unique and competing life-style in the ancient world.

9.0.2 How was Christianity perceived as it made its way? The earliest Christian confession that *Jesus is Lord* affirmed faith in him as God present in the flesh savingly. What did this confession entail for life?

9.0.3 In *Acts* 18: 26 at Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila instructed Apollos the popular and eloquent synagogue speaker more fully in *The Way of God*. As an aside, it is significant that Priscilla appears to take the lead in interpreting the person of Christ to Apollos. Of the five references to this couple, Aquila is mentioned first in the usual husband and wife referential sequence (*Acts* 18:2; *I Corinthians* 16:19), but when the couple is mentioned in connection with witness and ministry, her name comes first (*Acts* 18:18, 16; *Romans* 16:3).

9.0.4 Fascinating textual variants in the Apollos conversion passage reflect early Christian struggles about self-identification and titling. Doubtless, the oldest manuscript readings of *The Way of God* (*Acts* 18:26) are correct, but other early variants read *Way of the Lord*, *God's Way* and *The Way*. Identification of Christianity as *The Way* occurs often (*Acts* 9:2; 16:17; 19:23; 22:4; 24:14). While this designation may be rooted in Jesus' own word about himself as *The Way* (*John* 14:6), it probably derives from the common use of the term *way* to identify a manner of life based upon a distinctive philosophy or religious persuasion. The use of the term in classical times parallels today's common use: an action, or journey ('making one's way') done in a particular manner, on a particular path, to a particular end, hence its use to identify the Christian Faith and its followers. What did the Christian Way entail?

9.0.5 Religious life in the Roman Empire was cultic, impersonal and ritualistic. The cults functioned as pluralistic expressions of divinity within society. The Cult of the Emperor served as the umbrella cult. He embodied the genius of the Empire. Because the Emperor was deemed to incarnate the divine spirit of the Empire, his genius was worshipped - something Christians refused to do. They at once became marked people because they placed themselves outside the religious framework of a sacral society.

9.0.6 Religious cults abounded. Some entailed painful initiation rites, but most prescribed ritual acts such as libations which gave impetus to societal cohesion and patriotism. Many celebrated the cycle of life such as the fertility cults, the death and resurrection cycle of Eleusis, and orgiastic mysteries like the cult of Dionysius. There were ascetic ones such as the cult of Orpheus. Others, like the Magna Mater cult of Attis and Cybele, included the *taurobolium*, during which the devotee bathed in the blood of a slain bull for re-birth. The concept of birth or re-birth was common in ancient cultic practice.

9.0.7 Interesting aspects of ancient life were ease of conversion from cult to cult, or membership in more than one cult, and the sense of identity achieved through cultic devotion. A common theme was that through transcendental experience a new divinely energized self would emerge to displace the individual's ordinary social identity. However, transcendental absorption tended to diminish the worth of the individual and ritual asceticism became a cover for hedonistic or orgiastic practices. The cultic religions were lonely and impersonal and a profound sense of fatalism is reflected in Roman devotion to the will of the gods.

- 9.0.8           Tertullian (*On Baptism 5*) contrasts Christian practices with Mithraism in which occurred rituals of baptism, purification and the use of bread, water and wine, after consecration by priests called 'fathers.' He argues that frequent sprinklings of water to purify objects or bathings to expiate guilt were with 'widowed' water, i.e., water which lacked God's presence and power to make the needed change. The devil, too, could practice baptism, he says, but would he destroy himself by freeing his subjects of sin and guilt? Ritual sprinklings and cleansings of country and city houses, temples, even of whole cities, presumed that *the effect of their doing that is their regeneration and the remission of the penalties due to their perjuries* - but the guilt remains and the practices continue. Social solidarity was achieved by a frustrating and pointless quest for release from sin and guilt.
- 9.0.9           As the Empire flourished through vast increases in trade and commerce there emerged large mobile, entrepreneurially oriented middle classes which, like their modern counterparts, keenly felt their granular individualism, economic pressure to produce results, and personal loneliness. The aristocratic classes, as today, were deeply oriented toward the past rather than the future. They sought to conserve values and traditions, and built monuments to themselves. The poor lived for the pressing needs of the moment, often worse off than many slaves, in what was for them an unpredictable world. The emerging meritorious classes, which largely comprised entrepreneurial extended families, set goals for the future, deferred gratification and, to whatever extent business could allow for it, found friendship and personal identity in that context.
- 9.0.10          The rapid spread of Christianity was due in no small measure to penetration by The Faith of the new meritorious classes and their 'households' (*oikonomia*) which were formed not only by familial loyalty but also on grounds of social and economic interdependence. Households comprised a natural network of relationships through which the new faith spread. But this happened in a fresh, new way.
- 9.0.11          One must not underestimate the paternalistic authority of the State and its rival, the paternalism of the household, which usually included both freedmen and slaves. Nevertheless, the emergence of the concept of the citizen-individual on the one hand and the dependence of individuals on the household system on the other, worked in favor of the spread of Christianity. The pressure of nearby nations, regarded as primitive, combined with the threat of frequent wars tended to foster personal and economic loyalties which became the mechanisms for the spread of the Christian faith. It is noteworthy that unpenetrated, alienated segments of modern society characterize our urban centers, and myths of national identity do not compensate for the sense of personal isolation, loneliness and victimization today any more than they did in the past. The parallels between ancient and modern times are striking.
- 9.0.12          Within households, personal worth and relations, decency, frugality, diligence and industry all had a recognized place. When slaves and freedmen were converted, their manner of life and faithfulness were commended to others at first hand; when a family head was converted, this often entailed the conversion of the whole house (consider the implications of Paul's appeal to Philemon regarding restoration of the runaway slave Onesimus). It is true that solidarity of religion was expected in most houses, whether the head was despotic or paternalistic, but natural intimacies and loyalties also drew people to one another and to a common faith. The worth of the individual, whether bondman or freedman, was a key feature of the Christian appeal.
- 9.0.13          The same can be said for the many associations (*koinonia*) which existed. These formed the social mechanism for the spread of ideas, but also a pattern for relationships within Christianity. Gradually Christian conventicles sprang up everywhere, from which emerged the Church as known in post-Constantinian times. The Christian associations or conventicles provided a homogeneous and stable set of relationships to any traveling or migrating Christian stranger. He had an identity anywhere in the Empire and was

welcomed; he could worship the same one true God, he was offered hospitality and was cared for when ill. A new world *koinonia* and *oikonomia* had been created within the framework of the existing *politeia*.

9.0.14            These factors highlight important aspects of the Christian life-style, especially as regards the philosophical understanding of friendship and the basis in virtue of the Christian understanding of community (*koinonia*).

9.0.15            The Atomist Schools, like modern Materialism, reduced mind to physical functioning of the brain and personhood to behavioral responses. Inherent in ancient Atomism, as in its modern counterpart, were doctrines of Determinism and its corollary Fatalism, dressed up palatably as Hedonism.

9.0.16            The Idealist Schools denigrated the body and the physical world and usually regarded discrete personhood as an undesirable metaphysical aberration which would soon be cured by transcendental absorption. Undifferentiated transcendence was thought to be a higher value than the multiplicity of discrete personal life. The value of individual persons was subsumed to a postulated higher reality.

9.0.17            What is human worth as judged by the values of friendship and interpersonal relations? Does this have a bearing on our own heightened but increasingly barren individualism? The current soul-searching in our society about the decline and diminishing of the family, the erosion of the sense of natural community and of the bonds of national and mutual natural affection suggest that today we are confronting issues parallel to those of the ancient world into which the Christian faith was launched.

9.0.18            How far do, or should, likes and dislikes determine the nature and quality of friendship? The Greek Sophists saw friendship as a means to need-satisfaction - in utilitarian terms. Plato and Aristotle reacted to the Sophists by insisting that reciprocal love based on virtue must define the culture of friendship. Friendship is not merely a means to an end. But they left unanswered the question as to how to be good, except the Socratic dictum 'Know Thyself,' which meant that if one knew the truth, one would do that which is right. But it takes a moral person to acknowledge the truth: the truth we see depends upon the persons we are, only then follows the question of why we sin when we know better. The Stoics saw friendship as altruistic gesture by one who fundamentally is self-sufficient and in principle needs nothing and no one. The Epicureans defined friendship in terms of pleasurable gratification of emotional need. The ancient Schools prized friendship and devoted much time to discussing it, deeply puzzled that the friendship of even good persons is never wholly free from anxiety and the fear of betrayal. Only later, as in Origen, are women included as friends. Fear of sexual involvement, whether homosexual or heterosexual, was ever near the surface. Athenagoras heaps scorn upon homosexual activity, especially pedophiles. Christians have, he says (*Plea*, 32),

9.0.19            *a law which requires us to have right relations with ourselves and with our neighbors. Hence according to their age, we think of some as sons and daughters. Others we regard as brothers and sisters, while we revere those who are older as we would fathers and mothers. We feel it a matter of great importance that those, whom we thus think of as brothers and sisters and so on, should keep their bodies undefiled and uncorrupted ... For we center our attention not on the skill of making speeches but on the proof and lessons of actions.*

9.0.20            Utilitarianism, self-sufficiency, need-satisfaction - none of these answered to the highest levels of aspiration of the human soul. But, on the other hand, how does one become the virtuous person who functions in relation to the transcendent value of sincere, reciprocal, unexploiting love? In short, how do finite, sin-prone, selfish human beings create or develop or acquire a moral foundation for life and live by it. Augustine,

who wrote extensively on friendship, concludes that the only security for pure and loving relationships, including the security of friendship is shared faith in God. He draws an analogy between the hidden, impalpable elements of faith in God and the hidden impalpable elements of the loving trust which is inherent in true friendship (*Concerning Faith of Things Not Seen*, 3, 4; note also *On The Profit of Believing*, 23)):

- 9.0.21 *But you say, that you therefore believe your friend, whose heart you cannot see, because you have proved him in your trials, and have come to know of what manner of spirit he was towards you in your dangers, wherein he deserted you not. Seemeth it therefore to you that we must wish for our own affliction, that our friend's love towards us may be proved? ... If this faith be taken away from human affairs, who but must observe how great disorder in them, and how fearful confusion must follow? For who will be loved by any with mutual affection (being that the loving itself is invisible) if what I see not, I ought not to believe. Therefore will the whole of friendship perish, in that it consists not save of mutual love.*
- 9.0.22 Whence the virtue which can be the foundation of true friendship or, as we would say today, authentic relationships?
- 9.0.23 It is ironic but true that the Christian call to faith which demanded (if necessary) severance from all earthly ties if those ties prevented commitment to Christ, and Christian commitment to virtue, in fact created the mood for conserving family and forging friendship, to make life bearable in an era of increasing psychological isolation and social fragmentation.
- 9.0.24 Christians said that the world was created directly by God and that its beauty reflected God's handiwork. Athenagoras exclaims (*Plea* 4, 16),
- 9.0.25 *...we have so many good reasons to adore God - the order, harmony, greatness, color, form, and arrangement of the world ... Beautiful, indeed, is the world in its all-embracing grandeur, in the arrangement of the stars ... and in its form as a sphere. Yet it is not the world but its maker, who should be worshipped.*
- 9.0.26 Hence the logical bridge between the earthly and the heavenly realms is not that of a theory of appearance and reality (which is a form of demythologizing) but that of persons who, created in the image of God, are abiding realities and values. The world, responsibility, freedom, evil and sin are not reducible to other terms. Human life is the art of the Creator and discrete personhood is not only the goal of redemption but is, as well, the highest level of reality. If the Bible has any message at all, it is the message that God has in view a community of free good persons who will respond to his love, have duplicated in their lives the grace of Christ, and live in relationships of reciprocal love.
- 9.0.27 Christianity became an attractive alternative in the ancient world. In an age of brutality and high inflation, Christians cared about people. The Christian conventicles had a powerful sense of community and were radically egalitarian -- each was a drastic social experiment, a cave of Adullum. Emotional and social security were to be found within the Christian communities. Their ethical standards were high, their religious devotion to the one true God was intense, and their discipleship was life-encompassing. Converts were carefully examined, confession of faith was public, separation from the evils of society, demonology and cultic practices was total. But they were not anti-social. The power and vigor of such dedication must be seen in relation to their view of God, the world, morality and humanity. The existential appeal to faith was joined to conserving human beings of whatever station in life as values in themselves .
- 9.0.28 There is an important relationship between the Christian doctrine of creation, the Christian view of personality and the Christian doctrine of salvation. For Christians, human life is not a transient mode of existence in which a more enduring system of

patterns expresses itself, whether understood to be transcendental or as an inherent cosmic dynamic. Both empirical and theological reality are crucial to essential humanity. In a unique way, Christianity trumpets the call to arms in defense of humanity. As fashioned in the image of God, human beings have an ultimate value in themselves. Thus, what humans are and how they treat one another falls under a standard that is moral and divine. It is not simply a question of mores. That human beings are spiritual and creative agents, which attests to their being more than causally determined creatures, and to being more than ephemeral reflections of another world, and that redemption targets their renewal to become free, good persons, is the theme of the Christian doctrine of salvation.

## 9.1.0 **Grace as Key Feature: Personhood and Freedom**

### 9.1.1 **The Primacy of Grace**

9.1.2 The substance of salvation has been summed up aphoristically by Christians in all ages of The Faith. This invariably focuses upon God's initiative to save on terms of his holiness and love and as his gift. Grace is at center. The Reformation aphorisms were, chiefly, *Solo deo Gloria* (glory to God alone), *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), *Sola Gratia* (by grace alone) and *Sola Fide* (by faith alone).

9.1.3 There is no more simple and direct understanding of grace than that salvation depends upon God's unmerited favor, as free, unearned gift. Nevertheless, there is no more confusing issue than to try to untangle the threads which comprise Protestant, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox teaching and common lay understanding of grace.

9.1.4 The meaning of grace is rooted in the New Testament term *charis* (grace) which, as we shall see, carries ranges of use which include two main elements: (a) undeserved graciousness, kindness, favor which (b) bears fruit in a new quality of life (*charismata*) through a new dynamic released in life. The first of these is associated with the Protestant (German) term *gnade*, which emphasizes God's gracious bending down of himself to our condition and need; the second to the Roman Catholic (Latin) term *gratia*, by which is meant enablement toward spiritual perfection.

9.1.5 In all forms of the doctrine, including the Eastern Orthodox, there remain difficult questions as to the function of material objects in the transmission of grace, i.e., sacraments, hymns, prayers, fasting, vigils and other spiritual exercises. On one side of the issue, theologians of the several traditions have sought to avoid the Pelagian notion of self-improvement apart from grace; and on the other side, to avoid a crass doctrine of *ex opere operato* - the idea that grace functions efficaciously through sacraments regardless of the faith-response of the individual. Protestant theologians are unconvinced that Roman Catholic theology successfully avoids the latter difficulty.

9.1.6 In **Roman Catholic** teaching the meaning of grace (*gratia*) is rooted in Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings. Nevertheless, in late medieval Roman theology grace is God's action in Christ which enables us to attain spiritual perfection, chiefly by means of the sacraments and spiritual exercises. There follow elaborations such as justifying grace, sanctifying grace, habitual grace, infused grace, prevenient grace, sufficient grace, efficacious grace. External factors raise the question of the relation of human freedom to God's sovereignty and providence in grace, while participatory sacramental factors raise the question as to whether grace is a reality distinguishable and separate from God's personal activity and presence.

9.1.7 Thus, there remains for all Christians the matter of how to understand and correlate grace as God's gratuitous and prevenient beneficent activity (in relation to sin and death) and grace as the new divine influence which operates within human nature

redemptively. The first raises the question of predestination and the second the question of human freedom.

- 9.1.8                    **Eastern Orthodox** theologians like Roman Catholic theologians have devoted attention primarily to the practice of the life of grace rather than to subtle scholastic distinctions. Grace is divine energy (the life-giving and living power of God) which pervades the natural world but is also specific to salvation. From the time of Adam, grace works restoratively in history (Western theologians would here charge synergism) to overcome the weakening effects of sin. Thus salvation is a process of divinization, as some Church Fathers may be interpreted to have said. This coheres with the powerful impetus of the monastic life in Eastern Orthodox theology and piety. In Eastern Orthodox theology the freeness of grace is assumed; what is stressed is spiritual maturing by means of energizing grace.
- 9.1.9                    The **Protestant** doctrine of grace sought to free the doctrine of salvation from any sense of its being dependent upon or conditioned by human achievement, even works such as participation in the sacraments. The Protestant Reformation was a return to Augustine's anti-Pelagianism and comprised rejection not only of the medieval theory of the sacraments and penances, but of the whole Roman Catholic doctrine of grace. Such criticism and rejection has been powerfully re-stated in this century by Karl Barth.
- 9.1.10                  *Sola gratia* (by grace alone) and *Sola fide* (by faith alone) deny salvation by works. This denies that any works can contribute in any way to salvation, including religious exercises such as sacraments. While there has been softening of tensions between Protestants on one side and Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theology on the other (and, as well, between Roman Catholic theology and Eastern Orthodox theology) there is nevertheless on-going anxiety among Protestants that the sacramental and hierarchical structure of Roman Catholic theology tends to obscure the gratuitousness of grace and hence the freeness of justification as God's gift through his gracious activity in Christ.
- 9.1.11                  Thus, in Protestant theology the term grace is scarcely used for the regenerating or sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in order, I think, to make clear that grace understood synergistically obscures Paul's central concept. In Protestant theology, imputed righteousness is related to grace, while infused righteousness is dealt with under the term sanctification and the on-going work of the Holy Spirit in human experience. As well, the correcting focus of Protestant theology includes repudiation of Natural Theology, more, I think in its medieval Roman Catholic form than the Eastern Orthodox concept of God's on-going energizing activity in the creation.
- 9.1.12                  **Issues that remain:** Protestant, Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic theology all affirm that salvation is God's free gift given through the crucified and risen Christ. However, Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic teachings regard the sacraments as the divinely appointed mode to receive God's gifts. Protestants insist that the freeness of grace and justification by faith alone are essential biblical correlatives and that they comprise the essence of the doctrine of salvation.
- 9.1.13                  Protestant, Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic theology all insist that humanity's relation to God must be seen to be personal and ethical and that there cannot be 'mechanical' or 'physical' means of salvation, including the sacramental transfer of grace. Roman Catholic Theology seeks to safeguard salvation in this sense by the requirements of penitence and faith as part of the sacramental approach to God. Protestants argue that interposition of the sacraments tends to the error of *ex opere operato* (validity of performance apart from faith). Protestants insist that the preaching of the Word of God and the response of penitence and faith are the New Testament methods of restoring communion between sinful humanity and God.

9.1.14 Protestant and Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic theology all say that salvation is neither earned by humans nor received as a reward for merit. Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic theology argue that the *Operans* is God, not human agency. Protestants guard the divine initiative by insisting that even faith is God's gift.

9.1.15 In all forms of the doctrine there remains the problem of reconciling: (a) the personal and moral character of human life (therefore of human responsibility) with the truth of absolute human dependence upon God's free gift of salvation; and, (b) with the role of material factors in religion.

## 9.2.0 **The Biblical Doctrine of Grace**

### 9.2.1 **Grace in the Old Testament**

9.2.2 In view of the fact that the word 'grace' translates the New Testament Greek word *charis*, in what ways does the Old Testament identify God's grace? Fundamentally, grace is defined and expressed as God's loving-kindness or mercy, not only to the helpless, but also the undeserving; and is linked with God's election of Israel for his own purposes. (For expanded comment, see my study, *The Grace of God*, 1966).

9.2.3 A range of Old Testament terms, metaphors and images describes grace in the Old Testament.

9.2.4 *Aheb* signifies God's love for his people, first as electing love, then as sustaining love through his providence (*Deuteronomy* 4:37-40, *Isaiah* 63:7-9). His loving grace extends to them even when they are unfaithful (*Hosea* 11:1, 4, 8).

9.2.5 In particular, the term *Hesed*, loving-kindness, signifies God's unfailing love to fulfill his covenant promise to redeem his people (*Deuteronomy* 7:6-8; *Hosea* 2:19)

9.2.6 Other terms include 'mercies' (*Rachamin*), which relates grace to God's deep-seated feelings about human need (*Psalms* 25:6); to pardon or cover sin (*kaphar*, *Deuteronomy* 21:8); to pity or help (*chanah*, *Psalms* 123:3); and loving faithfulness (*Aman*, *Numbers* 23:19) which undergirds his messianic promise to redeem (*1 Samuel* 2:35).

9.2.7 The metaphors and images of the Old Testament also powerfully convey the meaning of God's grace. God relates to his people as: parent to child (*Exodus* 4:22); healing physician and refreshing dew (*Hosea* 14:4-5), loving bridegroom (*Jeremiah* 2:1-2); a shepherd who cares for his sheep (*Psalms* 80:1) a vinedresser who tends his vineyard (*Isaiah* 5).

### 9.2.8 **Grace in the New Testament**

9.2.9 While law and grace in the New Testament appear to be polar opposites, grace operates in terms of God's righteousness and holiness as the expressions of his love. as in the Old Testament. God's righteousness is never purely rectoral; it is always tinged by grace. It is a righteousness that is 'more than' strict legalism (*Matthew* 5:20).

9.2.10 While the word 'grace' is not found in *Matthew* and *Mark*, and but a few times in *Luke* and *John*, the focus of the Gospels is that Christ himself is the expression of God's grace (*John* 1:14, 16-17). Grace is what Christ is, what he has come to do, and the manner in which he does it.

- 9.2.11 The 'Word of grace' identifies the Gospel (*Acts* 13:43; 15:11) which embraces both Jews and Gentiles. The sacrificial death of Christ is God's action in grace (*Hebrews* 2:9).
- 9.2.12 Most of the New Testament focus upon grace is found in Paul's writings, as he shifts attention away from justification by works to salvation by grace alone, to be received by faith alone (*Ephesians* 2:8-9). The grace of God is his unmerited favor as expressed in Christ (*Romans* 5:17-21). This is the central theme of both *Romans* and *Galatians*. The link between grace and the Cross is direct (*Romans* 3:24, *2 Corinthians* 8:9). The only appropriate human response to grace is faith (*Romans* 3:25).
- 9.2.13 To this relational understanding of grace, Paul adds the sense that the life of grace is a transformed life. Grace is a transforming power (*1 Corinthians* 15:10; note also *2 Peter* 3:18). Christian experience thus begins in grace and it continues in grace (*2 Corinthians* 12:9), expressed in the gifts of grace (*charismata*), which means a virtuous life. The relational sense of unmerited favor along with the response of faith pin-points the issue between Protestant and Roman Catholic theology; the energizing or transforming sense of grace pin-points the issue between Protestant thought and Eastern Orthodox theology. In both cases divergence tends to obscure values inherent in the opposed view. Nevertheless, Protestant theology has consistently questioned any quantitative sense of grace as that by so much sacramental participation or performance of religious exercises such and such an amount of grace is received.
- 9.2.14 **Prevenient Grace**
- 9.2.15 Philosophically, grace is the mode of the relation between God and the world in virtue of which God remains God and human beings can be free and responsible. The reality of freedom is the fundamental contrast between systems of Materialism and Idealism and the Christian doctrine of creation.
- 9.2.16 Religiously, grace is God's favor or free bounty. It is unmerited, spontaneous, free, generous and abiding.
- 9.2.17 In its religious expression, grace is, first and foremost, God's **attitude** to sinful human beings who are guilty and under condemnation for sin. This is the spontaneity of grace: the fact that God initiates redemption out of his infinite love and in relation to his holiness.
- 9.2.18 Second, grace expresses God's **action** toward sinful human beings who are needy and helpless. God's grace entails both benevolence and help. His gift of grace is matched by the action of grace to reconcile sinners.
- 9.2.19 Thus grace is the mode of God's relation to the world and exercise of power in the world such that process becomes progress and he secures the teleological footing of the world so as to achieve conscious, intelligent ends which issue in goodness, freedom and creativity in the creatures he has made and redeemed. On a vertical scale of values in which freedom is at the top as the highest value, and unfreedom (the bondage of sinful conditioning) is at the bottom as the lowest value, God in his providence and grace meets us at the point in the scale of our freedom or unfreedom in order to maximize our freedom to full, redeemed personhood in dependence upon him and fellowship with him and, as well, on similar terms, in dependence upon one another and in fellowship with one another. Love, personhood, grace, and freedom all cohere to the end of the creation and redemption of free good persons who will share in God's purposes for life. The ultimate nature of reality is of persons and personal relations and grace is the mode of the relations which make personhood and freedom possible.

- 9.2.20 There is a fundamental antinomy which is inherent in the doctrine of Grace, namely, the sovereignty of grace in relation to the reality of freedom. Faith is both an act of the will and a surrender to God's will. There is the prevenient working of grace in relation to human helplessness in sin and the continuing working of grace in life following commitment to faith. Grace thus expresses unmerited favor and providential help with a view to freedom. No solution to the intractable problem of prevenient grace is plausible if on the one hand freedom is denied and on the other a predisposing, mechanical view of grace is espoused. Only on grounds of mutually personal relations (therefore of freedom) can a doctrine of prevenient grace and predestination be built.
- 9.2.21 It is out of the divine purpose that predestination and election arise. In this sense, purpose (*prothesis*, *Romans* 8:28; *Ephesians* 3:11) is a specifically Pauline word. The purpose of God is universal (*Ephesians* 1:11, all things after his own counsel), eternal (*Ephesians* 3:11, God's own purpose; *2 Timothy* 1:9, i.e., its explanation is in God's intentions alone), it involves choice (*Ephesians* 1:4, *Romans* 9:11), and is perfectly intelligible (*Ephesians* 3:11, i.e. its meaning is in what God signifies in and by Jesus Christ).
- 9.2.22 Predestination and election arise out of purpose. Election is action consequent upon purpose and choice (*Romans* 8:29; 9:11). The terms predestination, election, calling, called saints indicate the general intention of God to provide a plan of salvation. Foreknowledge (*prognosis*) and predetermination (*pro'orismos*) recognize individuals who will believe and the providential arrangements leading to that result.
- 9.2.23 There is a limitation. Predestination is to life, not to wrath. In *Romans* 9:22-23 Paul speaks of the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction by use of a passive participle, not an active verb attributing the action to God. In *Matthew* 25:32, 41, speaks of those who are blessed of the Father as against those who are accursed (but not predisposingly of the Father). The work of God is associated with grace; the doom of evil doers is associated with human beings themselves.
- 9.2.24 In the writings of Paul, prevenient grace, predestination and the divine call to faith are never expressed speculatively but always as the source, support and crown of salvation, and always with a balance between freedom and responsibility. Predestination is matched by conformation (*Romans* 8:29; *Ephesians* 1:4; *1 Peter* 1:2). God's purposes are intended to encourage Christians in their trials (*Romans* 8:32-39), in their service (*Ephesians* 2:10) and to final preservation as a testament of his grace.

### 9.3.0 **The Experience of Grace: Repentance and Faith**

#### 9.3.1 **Repentance**

- 9.3.2 Happy and grateful awareness of God's grace leads to conversion, and while conversion can mean the turning of a whole nation to God - such as the response of Israel to God under Moses' leadership or the response of Ninevah to Jonah's preaching - the basic sense of conversion is personal: the turning of individuals to God in penitence and faith. Repentance and faith are like the two sides of a common coin: they of necessity belong together.

- 9.3.3 Repentance entails recognition and turning (away) from a pattern of thinking which issues in certain courses of action. It is a change of mind about behavior which results in a change of direction: 'I thought this, but it was incorrect;' 'I did this, but it was wrong.'

- 9.3.4 In the Old Testament, the term *Nacham* signifies change, on God's part accompanied by action in response to human failure (*Genesis* 6:6-7; *Judges* 2:18-20; *I*

*Samuel* 15:11, 29). It often designates God's turning away from inflicting deserved punishment because the people (like the Ninevites) have turned from their evil ways (*Jonah* 3:9-10; 4:2). In regard to human behavior, the term conveys the sense of shame due to wrong thinking or wrong behavior, as when *Job* (42:6) says of his ideas about God's dealings with him, *Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

9.3.5 The term *Shubh* powerfully conveys jointly the ideas of sorrow and turning, which God will mercifully honor (*1 Kings* 8:47, note the entire passage 46-50). It signifies willingness on the part of the people to give up alienation from the Lord along with its misleading idols and accompanying transgressions (*Ezekiel* 14:6; 18:30-32).

9.3.6 In the New Testament the primary term is *metanoia*, which indicates a change of mind. The English term repentance is more emotionally loaded in use than its Greek counterpart usually is; nevertheless, regret for sin is part of repentance. *Metanoia* signifies conscious turning away from or giving up of a way of thinking or of behavior. Repentance is life-encompassing, including intellectual reconstruction (*2 Timothy* 2:25), a change of mind in the sense of change of will (*Acts* 8:22), along with appropriate emotional response (*2 Corinthians* 7:20). *Repent and be converted* (*Acts* 3:19) combines the sense of regret for sin with turning away from sinful behavior.

9.3.7 The noun *Epistrophe* and its verb form denote turning in the sense of conversion. The single use of the noun in *Acts* 15:3 recounts the momentous conversion of Gentiles to Christ, which parallels the messianic mission of Christ to Israel (*Luke* 1:16-17). The term identifies the turning to God in the book of *Acts* of many different ethnic groups through the evangelistic efforts of the first Christians (*Acts* 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:20). Included is the full sense of conversion: the turning from old ways and turning to God (*2 Corinthians* 3:16; *1 Thessalonians* 1:9); from darkness to light (*Acts* 26:18); from wandering to the Shepherd of souls (*1 Peter* 2:25); from evil ways to moral transformation (*Luke* 22:32; *Acts* 3:19); a turning which cannot admit of returning to old ways of thinking and behaving (*Galatians* 4:9). This latter passage is particularly striking because the word *elements* refers to the Epicurean atomistic metaphysics and hedonist ethics, a materialistic, non-spiritual, purely behavioral world view which advocates pleasure as the chief end of life.

9.3.8 There are also a few occurrences of *metamelomai* (used chiefly for *nacham* in the Septuagint) which parallels the meaning intended by *metanoia*, namely, to change one's mind, carrying with it deep feelings of regret or remorse, as in the case of Judas (*Matthew* 27:3), or of apology (*2 Corinthians* 7:8). However, the latter passage carries also the sense of 'sorry, but not sorry,' not unlike the indecision of another occurrence in *Matthew* 21:30, 32.

9.3.9 True repentance includes self-consciousness of sin - *I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me* (*Psalms* 51:3) - along with recognition that the sinning is directly against God. But this can amount only to remorse unless there is a distinct turning away from wrong ways of thinking about one's behavior and responsibility, an option which opens up once the good news of God's grace and love is heard. Jesus promised that it is uniquely the function of the Holy Spirit to bring about awareness that leads to repentance (*John* 14:8-11). This function of the Holy Spirit in the world remains largely undeveloped in the theology of evangelism.

9.3.10 **Faith**

9.3.11 Faith is the *turning to* in the equation which includes the *turning from* of repentance, as Paul indicates in *1 Thessalonians* 1:9, previously noted. While faith embraces the general conviction that God exists (*Hebrews* 11:6), in the New Testament its primary focus is upon hearing and believing the Gospel concerning Jesus Christ: *Faith*

*comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ (Romans 10:17).*

- 9.3.12 Christian faith is not merely a nebulous religious or cultural heritage, as authentic and valuable as that heritage may be. Nor is it merely crisis faith which serves its purpose at a critical juncture in life. Faith is not blind. Faith is not, as Freud said, substitute-Father dependence. Faith is more than emotion and feeling, though these are almost invariably components of the experience of faith. Nor is faith merely propositional in the sense that one believes the truth of certain religious statements, as critically important as propositions are to authentic Christian faith. Finally, faith is not something based upon fear. Its response is glad. It is a response to the *perfect love which casts out fear (1 John 4:18)*.
- 9.3.13 The way in which propositions relating to faith function in the New Testament aptly epitomizes the two essential elements of Christian faith: the truth of what is believed and trust in the one who is that truth. Conviction as to the truth of who Jesus Christ is and commitment to him personally as the Savior are held to be conjointly the meaning of faith in the New Testament.
- 9.3.14 The fact-basis of faith is clear: to believe *that (hoti)* Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (*Romans 5:10; 10:9; 1 John 4:2-3; 5:1, 10*) is the indispensable foundation of faith.
- 9.3.15 Acceptance of someone's credible word (*moi*) is clear from *John 4:21* where, when Jesus says *Woman, believe me*, he means *take what I say to be true*.
- 9.3.16 Trust in, or commitment to, a person is the sense of *believing in (eis)* someone, as in *John 14:1* and *1 John 5:10*.
- 9.3.17 Similarly, to *believe upon (epi)* Christ (*Acts 16:30-31*) is all-inclusive. The call to faith embraces the truth *about* Jesus as well as commitment *to* Jesus. There can be no commitment to Jesus without some truth-basis of knowledge about Jesus.
- 9.3.18 This is the thrust of Paul's description of the preaching and receiving of the Gospel in *Romans 10:8-13*, which is crowned by the previously mentioned conclusion in verse 17.
- 9.3.19 The sense of faith's being rooted in the conviction as to the truth of something - in this case the truth of the Gospel about Christ - was a familiar theme in ancient times. I do not cite it as a direct parallel, but as an indication of the common logic inherent in language then as now. While the term faith (*pistis*) was used, for example by Plato, to mean *opinion*; it was also used in logic in the sense of conviction as to the truth of something which comprised the foundation of understanding of anything scientifically. That is, though credible, it did not allow for further proof or demonstration. For example, Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics 72ab* asks what a science can be based upon if in the nature of the case it is impossible to furnish an infinite regress of demonstration or proof; i.e., if this is based on that, and that on something else, how far back can one go, and what is the justification for the truth of the primary, indemonstrable axiom or axioms? His answer is: by an unshakeable conviction as to self-evident truth. The use of *pistis* (faith) in the New Testament is not unlike that in those cases where the foundation of faith in Christ is concerned. It is historical combined with a conviction that this, not that, is the truth of what was going on in the things that were happening.
- 9.3.20 Thus, Christian faith includes, first, belief (assent to the facticity of the historical data concerning Jesus Christ); second, conviction as to the truth of what is being said interpretively by the Apostles and apostolic writers about that data; and, third, trust, i.e., personal commitment to the personal object of faith, which combines within itself the

first two elements. Faith is best understood as trust, which underscores the personal character of the relationship, but it is a trust which includes the assent of the mind, the consent of the will, the credence of the intellect and the confidence of the heart. Faith in the heart of human beings answers to grace in the heart of God.

9.3.21 Christian faith is ever characterized by novelty; that is, the freshness of new discovery, of finding that there is no experience so difficult or repugnant but that there can be in and alongside it a fresh discovery of God's love.

9.3.22 Christian faith is often characterized by doubt. It grows *through* experiences of doubt and uncertainty. Sometimes one has a sense of disorientation and loss, like Peter's sinking into the sea. At other times faith is conjectural, which leads by a fruitful guess, right or wrong, and may need correction. But, for the most part faith is an instinct, like that of a migrating bird which, along with others in the flock, is directed unerringly to its goal. Faith is not incompatible with doubt, only with despair. The people of God in both the Old Testament and the New Testament are *commanded* to live in hope, a hope which is fixed upon the certainty of God and his faithfulness.

9.3.23 Christian faith may be rooted in all sorts of propaedeutic experiences, such as modern existential absorption with the finite in relation to the infinite, but it cannot remain amorphous if it is authentically the faith of the apostles and the first Christians. Faith is not a call to recognition of *something eternal* in us (absorption with which can become a living death), or of potentiality reaching out to some sort of God-fulfilling relationship. It is not simply flight (Plato's *eros*, the upward flight of the soul). Neither is it the struggle with contradiction, rooted so often in the madness of modern narcissism which fraudulently makes of ourselves God.

9.3.24 Repentance and faith move us to transparency, and transparency is the true cure for the isolation which feeds modern depression. Moderns who 'have-everything' are weighed down with meaninglessness. There is an *acedia*, a torpor, which eats at the soul, and its root is pride; a pride which refuses to change. How can individuals give up the possibility of becoming the persons they are? That is the challenge of repentance and of faith. The only way out is to give up the pride and the modern enjoyment of melancholia and to find the untapped happiness and usefulness which forgiven sinners have discovered in the reservoirs of Christ's love.

#### 9.4.0 **Quickening of Life: Regeneration and Sanctification**

##### 9.4.1 **Regeneration**

9.4.2 What did Jesus mean when he said to Nicodemus *unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3)*? When one considers how within the ethos of the ancient world ritual cultic claims of power and authority to exchange one's ordinary street identity for a new one were common, what must this apparently one more urging to newness mean? To Nicodemus, it appeared to be a moral improbability: how can anyone go back, like an infant to its mother's womb, for a fresh start to a soiled life? Recent modern public dalliance with being 'born again' has trivialized the concept.

9.4.3 The key question becomes how to translate a biological metaphor into a moral and spiritual reality? However, if 'new birth' is merely metaphor, does it not easily lend itself to deconstruction? The truth of regeneration is that procreation and birth apply to the transformation of life because in fact a new genetic beginning for the human spirit has occurred - a new birth has in fact taken place. Just as flesh in the sense of lustful human nature cannot produce anything higher than itself (*John 3:6; Romans 3:5-6, 13*), so a newly generated nature can produce goodness of its own kind. For a doleful list of the one as against the other, see *Galatians 5:16-25*.

- 9.4.4 The uniqueness of spiritual re-birth may comprise the backdrop of an interesting textual variant in *John* 1:13, seeing that it is the *Gospel of John* which focuses upon new life in Christ. The phrase *which were born* is supported by the Greek manuscripts and it grammatically correlates the plural form of the verb with the plural of those who become the children of God in verse 12. A variant occurs in some early versions and in citations which read *he who was born*, thus referencing Christ's unique birth. Of interest is the truth common to both renderings as to the supernatural character of the birth in each case. A parallel appears to be drawn by the redaction between the uniqueness of Christ's birth and human spiritual re-birth. While the variant may have occurred because of a desire to reinforce belief in the virgin birth of Christ, a more likely reason may be that the instinct as to unique birth led to the drawing of a parallel between Christ's unique birth and Christian unique re-birth in *John* 1:13, because of the prominence of re-birth in Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus in the third chapter.
- 9.4.5 The only possible Old Testament correlate to the Nicodemus passage may be *Ecclesiastes* 11:5 where the mystery of conception and birth are a parallel to the mystery of God's working throughout the world. New life begotten of God's Spirit through the Gospel is a unique New Testament concept.
- 9.4.6 A startling matter is the necessity which Jesus invokes, *unless one is born anew, he cannot ...* Though much debated, the *cannot* suggests inability or incapacity due to sin more than a forensic barrier to heaven, as a parallel to Paul's teaching that the flesh (sinful human nature) is incapable of producing spiritual fruit. This understanding matches Nicodemus' reply, *How can this be?* (*John* 3:9), which wonderingly questions not *that* such a change is needed, but *how* it can take place.
- 9.4.7 What happens in regeneration? It is new life begotten by a divine word through God's Holy Spirit. That new life makes of believers partakers of the divine nature. Paul speaks of new life in place of deadness (*Ephesians* 2:1) and of putting on a *new nature* which is created after the likeness of God (*Ephesians* 4:24). He epitomizes the new beginning as the *new creation* those become who are in Christ (*2 Corinthians* 5:17). Peter speaks of the new birth as partaking of the divine nature (*2 Peter* 1:4). The filial relationship expressed in *1 John* 3:2 (*we are God's children now*) is an extension of the becoming children of God and new birth themes already cited in *John* 1:12 and the Nicodemus passage.
- 9.4.8 The new birth takes place from above (*John* 3:3, 7), which is the literal rendering of the term *anōthen* which the AV and NIV render *born again*, and the RSV felicitously renders as *born anew*. It is God's act, not something which humans accomplish. That is the significance of *from above*.
- 9.4.9 How does regeneration come about? The answer is through the Gospel - through the giving and receiving of a word of truth. Regeneration is the inner change as to nature which comes about through the direction change that repentance indicates and faith seals. *James* (1:18) writes that the new spiritual birth occurs by God's will through the word of truth. Paul speaks of being the begetting father of the Corinthian Christians through his preaching of the Gospel to them (*1 Corinthians* 4:15) and in a change of metaphor (*Galatians* 4:19) as if he must again go through the pains of begetting and birth over the Galatian Christians because of their defection, or threatened defection, from the truth of the Gospel.
- 9.4.10 The full significance of the new birth metaphor comes through the equation of the Word of God with the seed. The divine word is the seminal trigger for new spiritual life. It is striking that Peter carries the Johannine metaphor to an interpretive conclusion (*1 Peter* 1:23). The seed is not like perishable semen which can produce only flawed human nature, but is the imperishable, unflawed, living and abiding word of God which begets new life. It is the truth of the Gospel, the precious and very great promises (*2*

*Peter* 1:4) which, when implanted in the heart, quicken new life. It is the good news (*1 Peter* 1:25) gladly received, which generates new birth. No proxy faith can generate this reality. It follows from hearing about and personal commitment to Christ. Jerome, the fourth century Latin Church Father, commented that we are not born Christians but become Christians by being born again: *Christians are made not born* (*Letter 107.1*; note also *Against Jovinianus* 1.39).

9.4.11                    **Sanctification**

9.4.12                    In the New Testament, sanctification is a two-sided coin: on the one side it signifies separation to God, and on the other the process of divinization, of the Christian's being re-fashioned into the image of God. Both are attributed to Christ. In the case of the first, to Christ's obedience which makes ours possible; and, in the case of the second, the working out of *Christ in you the hope of glory*. In the following I propose to clarify these two aspects, leaving exposition of the process aspect, the duplication in us of Christ's character, for consideration in the section on the Formation of Christian Character.

9.4.13                    My thesis is that Christ in his incarnate life is the primary sign of the Spirit's presence and power in humanity (Luke's theme of Christ as the Man of the Spirit, *Luke* 4:17-21) and that, therefore, Pentecost is the consequent sign (Luke's follow-through in *Acts*). The fundamental issue of God-likeness is the duplication in the Christian of the Spirit-bearing humanity of Jesus Christ.

9.4.14                    Sanctification, holiness, and God-likeness are synonyms in biblical theology. They define that which the image of God as expressed in character and behavior is intended to be.

9.4.15                    The Hebrew term (quodesh) and the Greek term (*hagiazō*) for holiness are used to convey three interlocking ideas: first, God's highness or separateness from both untainted and tainted finitude; second, his moral perfection; and, third, that the thing or person God sanctifies is thereby separated to God's use and fellowship; and, that such separation to God in the case of persons ought to reflect the moral quality of his own holiness: *as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct* (*1 Peter* 1:15, note also *2 Corinthians* 7:1).

9.4.16                    That God is transcendent and holy, and that humans are sinful needing cleansing, is beautifully portrayed in Isaiah chapter 6. The phrase *Holy One of Israel* (*Psalms* 71:22, 89:18) summarizes the common biblical understanding of God's transcendence and moral perfection which translates into the separation of persons and things to his use. Examples are the Aaronic priests, the Nazarites and many objects used in the service of God in the Tabernacle and Temple (*Exodus* 19:6; *Numbers* 6:2; *Deuteronomy* 26:19; note parallels in the New Testament such as *Matthew* 23:17, 19). The biblical data are so large that further documentation is not needed.

9.4.17                    The ethical side of sanctification relates to the sense of profaneness sinful human beings have. Holiness in God demands holiness in us. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit who unites the Christian to Christ, enables the forgiven sinner to resist sin, and renews sinful human nature in the image of God, thus enabling Christians to live in a manner which answers to goodness and charity.

9.4.18                    The two sides of sanctification relate to the finality of Christ's Cross and the ongoing transformation of life in virtue of the significance of Christ's Cross. In Protestant Evangelical theology these have been traditionally expressed as *have been sanctified* (*1 Corinthians* 6:11; *Hebrews* 10:10) and *are being sanctified* (*Hebrews* 10:14). The *Hebrews* 10:5-10 passage is crucial: the writer is saying that Christ's obedience was submission to the Father's will in holiness under judgment, which obedience takes up ours into itself, making it not only possible but also actual. Thereafter, those who by

Christ's one-for-all act of obedience *have been* sanctified (separated unto God in the sense of sinners justified by grace) are, as well, *being sanctified* developmentally.

9.4.19 The relation of sanctification to the Cross is intimate and crucial: the foundation of it is death, the death of being laid in the grave of the Lord Jesus (*Romans* 6:1-14) in order to rise to newness of life, as baptism signifies (not as mere symbol, but as faith's pledge to morally renewing reality). In *2 Corinthians* 5:14 Paul declares not only that Christ died our death, but also that in that death the Christian died. Death to sin (*Romans* 6:11; *Titus* 2:14; 3:5-7), death to the world and carnal desire (*Galatians* 6:14) and death to the old self, refashioned into a new self but with a common identity (*Galatians* 2:19-20) are the theological foundation of sanctification for Paul, upon which the whole edifice of Christian character is built.

9.4.20 Sanctification is described as uniquely the work of the Holy Spirit, spoken of initially as the *seal of the Spirit*. A seal in ancient times (as in the case of royal signet-ring imprint in wax or clay) was a mark of authority, of authenticity, of security and, often, of ownership. Those who are Christ's are sealed to the day of redemption, says Paul (*2 Corinthians* 1:20-22; 5:5; *Ephesians* 1:13-14; 4:32). Thus the seal of the Spirit is not an indelible mark on the body or in the psyche of a Christian. The seal is himself the Spirit. The seal is the personal presence of the Spirit in the heart as guarantor of on-going transformation and final glory.

9.4.21 Parallel to this, Paul says that the Holy Spirit *indwells* Christians. In addition to the foregoing texts, the following confirm this truth: Jesus' promise of the Spirit's coming and presence (*John* 17:14). Peter's declaration on the Day of Pentecost that those who believe *will* receive the gift of the Spirit, and many other passages in Paul's writings (*Romans* 5:5; 8:9-11; *1 Corinthians* 3:16; 6:19; *2 Timothy* 1:14; *Titus* 3:5; *1 John* 3:24). The presence of the Spirit is described not merely in terms of divine energizing but in terms of coinherence - a mutually personal relationship in virtue of which the Spirit makes Christ to be a living reality within the life of Christians and enables fuller and fuller response to Christ and his ideals.

9.4.22 In this respect, the Holy Spirit not only indwells each individual Christian, he instructs and molds by quickening memory of God's grace (*John* 14:26) leading to new insights. Thus the goal of the Spirit's presence is not ecstasy, nor out-of-mind experiences, but duplication of the Spirit-bearing humanity of Christ in the life of each Christian. The goal is Christ-likeness. All signs and wonders in the New Testament move toward moral and spiritual renewal. In this respect, in the New Testament no Christian is encouraged to pray for the baptism of the Spirit, but every Christian is exhorted to be filled with the Spirit, which is directly related in Paul's writings to moral transformation or the fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians* 4:16-26; *Ephesians* 4:17-20).

## 9.5.0 **Release from Guilt: Justification and Forgiveness**

### 9.5.1 **Justification**

9.5.2 It is a truism that 'justification by faith alone' was the primary Protestant Reformation mantra. *Sola gratia* (by grace alone) and *Sola fide* (by faith alone) summed up Reformation reaction to the works-based possibility of righteousness which characterized Church teaching and practice in medieval times. These phrases are symbols of Paul's teaching that sinful human beings can be justified before God only through the merit of Christ, God's gift of grace, through faith.

9.5.3 Why has justification, so central a feature of Protestant evangelical religious life as well as theology, become a non-starter for modern people? The true answer goes beyond boredom with or mystification of theological jargon. It lies in modern rejection or

re-definition of guilt. Only if sin and guilt are taken seriously does justification become important.

9.5.4

Modern rejection of guilt parallels ancient rejection based upon a purely behavioral and hedonist view of human nature. In Paul's day, the Epicureans represented the most influential secular vision for life. Epicurus said that justice is never any thing in itself and injustice is not an evil in itself. Only the consequences which we fear are important, not the act itself. In our day, we have added a genetic component to this ethical relativism, namely, that aberrant behavior can (always) be explained as due to factors beyond our control. *We* are not responsible. The positive side of Epicurus' equation is identical with modern Hedonism: pleasure, satisfaction, need-fulfillment, 'having it all' is the justification for action, which is defined in terms of expedience - the calculus of advantage about which Epicurus wrote to Menoeceus. The proper course of action, said Epicurus, is to scan the advantages and disadvantages of a course of action, to weigh them against each other, to ascertain *what will be the result for me?* Guilt disappears. Gratification becomes the norm of behavior. Paul calls this *kenodoxia*, vain-glorious, groundless conceit, because it can never become the foundation for a moral life, which not only he but others such as Cicero satirized.

9.5.5

Another modern, more indirect attack on the concept of guilt has been the Freudian re-definition of it. This is the sickness approach to personality disorder and aberrant behavior, versus a morally based understanding of behavior in relation to right and wrong. It is an odd, but striking fact, that the person who condemns himself or herself, even to thinking that he or she has committed the unpardonable sin, is closer to the possibility of forgiveness, healing and recovery than the one who blames others or deconstructs the meaning of guilt. Self-blame includes recognition that something is wrong, which the person concerned has done, and is the first step toward spiritual wholeness.

9.5.6

Re-defining guilt is the worst of two evils; the best is frontal recognition of the reality of guilt as due to sin and the need for forgiveness. Anything less piles on the guilt, putting the moral account into impossible deficit (this in no way constitutes a denial that there are many kinds of skewed guilt). Freud did not take guilt seriously, except as an aberration to be discarded. What is important is not the past, but the future, he said. Re-defined in this way, not awareness of responsibility for deeds done in the past but repression of what one wishes to do but dare not do because of an overly sensitive internal monitor, is his definition of guilt. From this follows the modern quip, 'if it feels good, do it.' But the *inhibition* definition of guilt can never deal with the true difficulty, which is awareness of *actions* which were morally proscribed. An animalistic view of human nature treats guilt as inhibition; a moral view of human nature treats guilt as the issue of an outraged conscience - a conscience which is made aware of a standard of righteousness which transcends mores and expedience.

9.5.7

Justification concerns real guilt. There is, of course, the wider meaning of justification as theodicy and expectation, which is the belief that God will vindicate himself and his purposes either historically or at the final judgment. But in relation to human sinfulness and responsibility, justification concerns the expunging of sin and its guilt. Paul's question goes to the heart of the matter: if God is just to judge sin, how can he forgive the sinner? How can God be both just and justifier? (*Romans 3:26*).

9.5.8

Thus justification is to a forensic issue. The picture is that of a court of law - the gate of the town where the judges sat - but not one in which a special prosecutor brings a charge; rather, one in which accuser and accused face each other and the judge 'justifies' one or other, i.e., as a matter of law, not moral character. Add to this the issue of law and sin as they relate to moral character and one has the matrix of actual, moral guilt and the need for not only judicial acquittal but also for moral renewal in relation to holy law.

- 9.5.9           The foregoing encapsulates the traditional issue of whether God *declares* sinners righteous based on grace and forgiveness (as Protestants say) or whether God *makes* people righteous based upon that same grace and forgiveness (as Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox piety say). Or, is the disjunction between imputed righteousness and actual change artificial and disingenuous and are both true? Is the disjunction overcome in the previously noted differentiation between sanctification as once-for-all and sanctification as on-going? Ought we to re-combine the meanings of justifying grace and sanctifying grace?
- 9.5.10           Thus in the totality that salvation in Christ is, conversion involves a person's change of direction and attitude, regeneration concerns a change in inner nature, justification concerns change in one's standing before God judicially, and sanctification embraces all three in that it envisions a renewal of life into a Christ-like image.
- 9.5.11           The Reformers quickly discerned a pattern in the Old Testament which climaxes in the finality of Christ's atoning death and Paul's teaching on justification by faith. The first hint is in *Genesis* 15:6 where Abraham believed God and he reckoned it to him as righteousness. The second is *Psalms* 32 where the person who confesses sin finds that God does not impute iniquity. This psalm is a dramatic psychological paradigm of confronting guilt and release from it once sin is confessed and forgiven. The third is *Habbakuk* 2:4, where faithfulness has in view the foundation of faith for the life of the just (picked up by Paul in *Romans* 1:17 and *Galatians* 3:11, and by the writer of *Hebrews* in 10:38). This strategic theme is then developed in Paul's preaching and teaching (*Acts* 13:38-29 and the entire books of *Romans* and *Galatians*). Additional references simply reinforce the critical importance of justification by faith for Paul: *Romans* 3:21, 27, 28; 4:3-4; *Ephesians* 2:9; *Titus* 3:5.
- 9.5.12           Justification restores the sinner's true relation to God. The human condition is identified by sin, guilt, condemnation and alienation. Justification entails the removal of condemnation through forgiveness which is based upon Christ's bearing of the condemnation. Guilt is displaced by imputation of Christ's righteousness. Alienation is removed because the gap between God and humanity has been bridged by Christ's holy submission under judgment. Hence, Paul can declare that God is both just and the justifier of the person who believes in Jesus. This is the high point of the praise which Paul reaches at the end of his argument on justification in *Romans* chapter 8: no guilt (*who shall bring any charge against God's elect?*, 33; no condemnation (*who is to condemn?*, 34); no alienation (*who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*, 35). Justification is a judicial act issuing in an attitude which coheres with a morally renewed and transformed life.
- 9.5.13           In its primary sense, justification clearly means to declare just in a forensic sense. Paul's intent is to declare forensically that the demands of God's holy law as the condition of life which God and humanity share have been fully satisfied by Christ's life and in his death. It deals with the objective relation between God and humanity created by sin and guilt. While there is the danger of divorcing righteous living from righteous standing, the latter cannot be evacuated of meaning. But correlation of the twin truths is essential. Justification means to account righteous. It is complete, never to be repeated. Jesus Christ is thus both the foundation of peace *for us* (*Romans* 5:1) and the foundation of wholeness and renewal *in us*. As an aid to understanding the wholeness of this teaching, the chapter-break between 5 and 6 in *Romans* is regrettable. On grounds of freeness of grace and the righteousness in Christ, Paul can ask, *Shall we continue in sin?* By no means, he says.
- 9.5.14           It remains to reinforce three truths: First, the ground of justification is the righteousness and merit of Christ, not human faith. Centuries ago, at the time of the English Reformation, Bishop Richard Hooker commented, *God doth justify the believing man, yet not for the worthiness of his belief, but for his worthiness who is believed*

(*Defense of Justification*, 33). Second, the means of justification is faith alone (note *Acts* 13:39). Faith in humanity is the appropriate response to grace in God. Third, the ongoing spiritual values of the doctrine are significant: it is related to the forgiveness of sins (*Acts* 16:18; *Romans* 3:24-25), to spiritual wholeness (*Romans* 5:1-6) and to confident sonship and service (*Romans* 8:1, 17). The verdict God gives *vis-a-vis* the righteousness of Christ rightly looks forward to the correct verdict on the final day of judgment (*Romans* 2:16 in relation to *Romans* 5:18, 21).

9.5.15                    **Forgiveness**

9.5.16                    Can anything transcend the joy of knowing that one is a forgiven sinner? Earlier I referred to *Psalms* 32 which, along with David's confession in *Psalms* 51, is among the most poignant passages in the *Psalms*. They are remarkable insights into the release and wholeness which forgiveness brings. An instructive parallel is Augustine's *Confessions*, especially Book 8, which records the final conquering of his intellectual pride and commitment to Christ.

9.5.17                    Jesus linked God's forgiveness and our own in the words of the prayer he taught his disciples (*Matthew* 6:12). While suffering the agony of the Cross he prayed the remarkable words, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do* (*Luke* 23:34). In granting forgiveness to the woman shunned by society (*Luke* 7:36-50), Jesus pointed out that love and yearning for reconciliation are preconditions to forgiveness - not only on the part of the person causing the injury, but also by those who have been offended. His insistence that forgiveness is a continuing work of grace amply highlights how hard it is to do.

9.5.18                    Forgiveness is fundamental to the apostolic understanding of the Gospel. Peter proclaimed forgiveness in the first recorded sermon in *Acts* to a largely Jewish audience (2:38), in his defense of Christian witness (4:3), and to the Gentiles (10:43).

9.5.19                    In the last recorded sermon to his fellow Jews at Antioch, before he turned to the Gentile mission, Paul, as Peter did at Jerusalem, vindicated the Gospel as the message of forgiveness through Christ (*Acts* 13:38), which he repeated before King Agrippa (*Acts* 26:18). Forgiveness is the core issue of the Atonement. Forgiveness is what Christ purchased substitutionarily for sinful humanity on the Cross (*Ephesians* 1:7; *Colossians* 1:14). On grounds of God's having forgiven us, we ought to forgive one another (*Ephesians* 4:32).

9.5.20                    Forgiveness is not merely a formality. It is not something that is merely verbal, without cost. It does not logically follow from love unless the one who forgives redemptively absorbs the evil that has been done.

9.5.21                    Sin causes offense and injury. When one person sins against another, he or she causes the one sinned against to suffer. What happens in the experience of the offended person depends upon how the injury is taken. Thus, forgiveness begins with the person injured, not the injuring one.

9.5.22                    If the offense works like a cancer to spread the evil by the reaction of the offended party, forgiveness is impossible. The power of a vicarious act, in particular the vicarious sufferings of Christ, is the power to increase the store of good by absorbing the power of evil. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*, stands at the heart of God's forgiveness. Christ on the Cross triumphed over the worst barbs of evil because they could not corrupt him.

9.5.23                    To absorb evil is the foundation of forgiveness. Something must happen in the heart of the injured party before anything happens in the one needing forgiveness. The injured one stays the evil; the situation is redeemed. That is the objective basis of

forgiveness. It entails triumph over the corrupting power of sin by transforming its power for good. Atonement is not mere transaction. God deals with evil both morally and ontologically. Sin is forgiven as it is borne.

9.5.24 God has entered this world personally in Jesus Christ. God in Christ has accepted the guilt, pain and judgment of sin. Indeed, as the sinless one, he alone fully experienced what sin and judgment mean. The Cross is no mere gesture of love. By the Cross God has dealt with evil without either denying the reality of creation or the freedom he has given to human beings. Through the Cross a new principle has been released into the world, namely, that it is greater to bear suffering than to inflict it; that love is able to go outside itself to make the burden of others its own. Forgiveness exhibits the power of vicariousness, the regenerative power of a redemptive act. Just as God forgave long before any single person repented, Christians are called upon to practice forgiveness in their interpersonal relations.

## 9.6.0 **Formation of Character: Virtue and Devotion**

### 9.6.1 **Virtue**

9.6.2 Paul's theology is built on the assumption that nothing spiritual can happen in Christian life apart from the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin and attracts to Christ and, upon conversion, baptism and union with Christ, the Spirit permanently resides in each Christian. Christians become *a temple of the Holy Spirit within you (1 Corinthians 6:19)*. Christians are not told to pray for the Spirit to 'indwell' them, or to 'seal' them, even to 'baptize' them. The Spirit's presence in each Christian is a reality from the day of commitment to Christ. In this chapter, Paul's point is not to question whether the Holy Spirit is present, but whether certain attitudes and behavior are consistent with the Spirit's presence.

9.6.3 Paul's purpose is to draw his readers to the crux of the matter: the presence of the Spirit is a call to virtue; at issue is the question of character. Paul moves from statement to command, from declaration to obligation, from what is a matter of fact to what ought to be the case, namely, *be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)*. What does this mean?

9.6.4 To begin with, in this passage Paul directly contrasts the filling of the Spirit with out-of-mind experience such as a debauched mind (note also *1 Corinthians 14:23*). His answer follows (*Ephesians 5:19-33*): being filled with the Spirit involves moral transformation the result of which he elsewhere describes as the *fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25)*. Paul's exhortation to *walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16)* parallels the command to *be filled with the Spirit* and focuses upon moral renewal and characteristics which follow from renewal.

9.6.5 To what end? First, to escape from (which also means to turn one's back upon) a carnally-minded life which exhibits a doleful list of characteristics. In passing, it is important to note that Paul is well aware of the conditioning effects of evil behavior. The verb translated *do* (in *do such things*) means *wont to practice* such things. The following exposition is abstracted from my commentary on *Galatians 5:16-26 (New Bible Commentary Revised, 1970, pp.1102-1103)*:

9.6.6 The works of carnal impulse are common knowledge: sexual sins (fornication, impurity, wantonness); pagan practices (idolatry, witchcraft); sins of passion and sedition (enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, self-seeking, dissension, division, envy); sins of indulgence (drunkenness, carousing) and, he adds *the like*. Here, as elsewhere (for example, *1 Corinthians 6:9-10*) Paul states flatly that certain kinds of behavior are proscribed.

- 9.6.7                   Against the foregoing, Paul pits his concept of a moral life. But he does not propose unattainable moral ideals for which no motive force is furnished; rather, the moral life aspired to has furnished along with the ideal ethical motivation and enablement. It should be recalled that Greek philosophers such as Plato had indeed proposed noble ethical ideals, but the rational life appeared capable of doing little more than talking about them, as Athenagoras later said about the schools. Rather, Paul says that realization of the ideal is the *fruit of the Spirit* (*Galatians* 5:22). The collective noun *fruit* suggests a coherent ethical norm which is more than obedience individually or successively to rules of a code; rather, Paul is referring to a certain kind of character whose nature is such as to natively yield virtue.
- 9.6.8                   It is a spiritual harvest which is appropriate to the new divine life within Christians. Paul outlines the many-sided characteristics of a virtuous life. Whether these fall into classes of virtues is not clear, but they include inner personal qualities, qualities governing social relations and principles of conduct.
- 9.6.9                   a) Love, which does not seek its own selfish ends but the good of others.
- 9.6.10                  b) Joy, which is more profound than pleasure or happiness. It is based upon the conviction that one's life, as Christ's was, is deeply attuned to God's purposes.
- 9.6.11                  c) Peace means mental well-being, a peace founded upon the reality of forgiveness which is based upon Christ's atoning sacrifice (note *Romans* 5:1).
- 9.6.12                  d) Patience means longsuffering, which is forbearance of one another just as God has been merciful to us.
- 9.6.13                  e) Kindness, or gentleness, is inner goodness or rightness of heart which has due regard for the fragility of other's feelings.
- 9.6.14                  f) Goodness identifies the kind side of an ideal character. It is righteousness tinged by grace which aims to reconcile another who is estranged.
- 9.6.15                  g) Faithfulness means fidelity to others.
- 9.6.16                  h) Gentleness, translated *meekness* in the KJV, is due regard for one's own weaknesses and propensities to failure before judging others.
- 9.6.17                  i) Self-control or temperance translates a word well-known in Greek ethical theory (*engkrateia*) which means mastery of impulses - in Paul's use, keeping behavior in balance with the Spirit's aid, with a view to life serving useful ends.
- 9.6.18                  In Paul's theology, Christian experience begins by the Spirit and it continues by the Spirit.
- 9.6.19                  The high point of Paul's teaching as to the goal of the Spirit's presence in the life of each Christian is reached in *Romans* 8:11. In *Romans*, Paul has systematically moved to his conclusion through the successive stages of the rationale of salvation: universal condemnation for sin, including both Gentile and Jew (1:18 - 3:20); justification by faith on grounds of the atoning death of Christ (3:21 - 5:21); renewal through identification by faith-baptism with Christ's death and resurrection (chapters 6-7); and, finally, explication of the life in the Spirit who is the agent of renewal and hope (chapter 8), ending with the paean of praise (8:31-39). The key-feature climax of 8:11 is that the same Holy Spirit who quickened Jesus Christ to resurrection life, quickens Christians through his indwelling presence and agency. But this is not an action of the Spirit detached from Christ. Rather, the action of the Spirit is in regard to *Christ in you* (verse 10): The risen Christ is the content of the Christian life; the Holy Spirit is the sealing and enabling agent

of that content. In Paul's theology this fulfills the promise of Jesus that when the Spirit came (following Pentecost) he would glorify Christ in them, not himself (*John* 16:4, note also 14:26 and 15:26).

9.6.20 The mission of the Holy Spirit is to duplicate in Christians the quality of life of the incarnate Lord. I argued earlier that Christ is the Man of the Spirit - Luke's theme; he is the primary sign of the Spirit. Pentecost is the consequent sign because Pentecost follows through with the divinization of humanity into the image of the Spirit-bearing humanity of Jesus Christ. For Christians there can be no greater or fuller definition of what the fullness of the Spirit means: a God-indwelt character whose characteristics are identifiable as the fruit of the Spirit. Moral transformation into the image of Christ marks the fullness of the Spirit. Any thesis as to the Holy Spirit's function other than to glorify Christ by duplicating the qualities of his Spirit-bearing humanity in the life of the Christian will prove to be mischievous.

9.6.21 Duplication of life in the Spirit in Christians follows from coinherence. The relationship between Christ and Christians, and between Christians themselves within the body of Christ, is personal, which means coinhering: *thou* (Father) *in me*, and *I in thee ... I in them and thou in me* (*John* 17: 21, 23).

9.6.22 What follows from coinherence?

9.6.23 First, the inhibiting power of proscription and conscience. Some things are quite simply wrong and must be avoided (as Paul indicates in delineating the characteristics of carnality) and the motivation and power to avoid them follows from the the coinhering personal realities: *Just as I do not wish to shame my wife or my children by certain behavior because they coinhere in me (they are part of that which comprises my selfhood), so I do not wish to offend Christ who by his Spirit indwells me* (*Romans* 8:10-11; *1 Corinthians* 6:15, 17, 19).

9.6.24 Second, the persuasive and attracting power of Christ as our moral ideal draws Christians to the values and characteristics which he exhibited in his normative humanity. In this respect the fourth century Church Fathers, following Irenaeus' concept of the *anakephalaiosis* (the recapitulation of the human race in Christ), argued that we ought to judge our humanity by Christ's, not his by ours. He is the Second Adam, the Last Man, which Paul develops in the fifth chapter of *Romans*. The substance of Christ's norming, Spirit-bearing humanity is comprised in what it means to abide in Christ; namely, to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

9.6.25 There has been, and continues to be, strong disagreement within Christendom as to the means of enabling grace which moves toward Christ-likeness. This engages the issue of the place and role of material factors in the Christian religion. Historically, differences are significant factors in the divisions between Eastern Orthodox theology and Roman Catholic teaching, between the Protestant tradition and both Eastern Orthodox theology and Roman Catholicism, between Lutheran and Reformed (including Presbyterian theology), and between Christians of the various Evangelical traditions, especially Baptists, whose views generally cohere with Reformed theology on the question of the role of sacraments and the material factors in religion.

9.6.26 If I as an evangelical Christian believe that certain teachings, or alleged implications of the teachings, of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Churches, which see grace primarily as infused grace sacramentally conveyed should be called into question, this must not on my part justify minimizing the genuineness of the spiritual quest of most Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Lutheran Christians, nor allow me to go unscathed because of Protestant Evangelical side-stepping the fact that evangelicals also employ material factors of

religion as means of grace, or that evangelicals also at times distort their use in worship or in ascetic practices and other acts of piety.

9.6.27 Earlier I wrote that the New Testament *far from speaking of formal religious means of grace, neither mentions nor allows for them* (*The Grace of God*, 1967, p. 60). The Lutheran theologian Eugene F. Klug (Concordia Theological Seminary, *The Springfielder*, 30:44-45, Winter 1967) properly took me to task that the comment was over-reaching. It is correct to the extent that I continue to deny that, formally, sacraments are *the* divinely prescribed vehicles of grace, but over-reaching in failing to say, as I believed then and believe now, that God utilizes many situations, events, actions and, at times, even objects as means of grace. These can include hymns, prayers, readings, sermons, and events perceived to be providential, as well as prescribed ordinances such as Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Focusing upon sacraments as the unique way for the infusion of grace leads, in my view, too easily to the formality of deeming to have acquired it *ex opere operato*. Such programmed formalities tend too often to become religious ritual rather than spiritual reality. In making this comment I acknowledge freely that evangelical worship may also become formal and empty of spiritual reality.

9.6.28 The instinct to superstition and idolatry is powerful. The question can be legitimately raised as to whether, on purely sociological grounds, religion developed from simple, animistic and totemistic practices, or whether the reverse is true; whether the tendency historically is not ascent but descent, from high monotheism to pluralistic idolatry. Paul suggests as much in *Romans* 1:20-23. Does consciousness of transcendent divine reality threaten our sinful independence, resulting in refusal to acknowledge God as God, and do we invent rites in an effort not only to please or placate God but, as well, to control him? The line between art and contrivance is indeed a fine one where religion is concerned. Material elements can easily fill the vacuum failure to acknowledge the living God creates. The integrity of authentic Christian religious experience can be maintained only with very great care. Certain basic experiences are as available to the skeptic as to the religious person - such as the idea of the numinous or the holy - thus discrimination as to what is religiously authentic and, further, what is authentically Christian experience, is vital.

9.6.29 Use of religious symbols is universal in all segments of the Christian tradition. These include situations in which God is experienced (such as monastic life or religious retreats); patterns of worship and devotional practice, both private and public; imaginative construction in art or architecture, and creativity in music; easily remembered doctrinal formulations such as the creeds or confessional statements; and ritual acts which combine most of the foregoing. Ritual acts incorporate performance (usually deemed to be authorized in one way or another) along with the use of material objects. Both can be employed legitimately, but both also can obscure or distort spiritual reality. The central issue is simulation or, in short, fraud. The physical conditions of ritual may simulate or resemble elevated spiritual experience, but they may also be a substitute for authentic religious experience.

9.6.30 Physical factors alone cannot produce the fullness of spiritual experience whether duly authorized rites are the actions of priests or ministers, musicians or teachers, witnesses or exhorters, and whether authorization and sanctification are hierarchical and formal or emergent and informal. This applies as much to forms of worship within Evangelical Protestantism, whether traditional or modern bombast, as it does to rites of the liturgical traditions.

9.6.31 The heart of the matter from the standpoint of Christian faith is authentic experience of God in the person of Jesus Christ which is apostolically (i.e., biblically) mandated and normed. The material elements of religious practice may predispose to religious experience (or they may hinder) but they cannot be a substitute for the experience of God, and the purpose of seeking God's face must never be an end in itself

(i.e., merely experience-seeking). Moments of intense awareness of God's presence must be integrated with the whole of life.

9.6.32 An important issue between the sacramental and Protestant traditions is, who gives the Spirit, or under what circumstances is the Spirit given? It is inaccurate to lump together all of the sacramental traditions on this question, but in the interests of brevity and, hopefully, of not serious inaccuracy, I cite the following:

9.6.33 In the Eastern Orthodox tradition Chrismation (anointing at the time of Baptism) signifies the arming by the Holy Spirit of the baptized person (usually an infant), by an episcopally authorized person, with strength and wisdom and other gifts to keep the right faith and to live a holy life (I am citing the formulary of the Serbian Orthodox Church). However, the bishop must prepare and consecrate the Chrism, without which a priest cannot perform Chrismation. The mandatory presence of the Bishop at (later) Confirmation in the Western traditions signals basically a parallel claim to exclusive Episcopal authority to transmit the Holy Spirit. If the theological form of this is denied, at least perception and practice almost universally concur. The importance of this matter cannot be exaggerated in regard to the means and transmission of grace (note my essay, "Ecumenism and the Gift of the Spirit," *Christianity Today*, April 28, 1967).

9.6.34 Evangelical Protestants insist that this thesis is incorrect. The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit is Gospel-centered and Christ-centered and is thus neither sacrament-centered nor succession-centered. This immediately runs a collision course with the core contention of the sacramental traditions: Proclamation of the Gospel entails response-centered reception of the Spirit (as in *Acts* 2:38) to which is added no sacramental qualification nor exclusive Episcopal mandate.

9.6.35 Nevertheless, Evangelical Protestants have much to learn from the liturgical traditions about infused grace - if by that term is meant the on-going process of sanctification predicated upon the never-to-be-repeated and final sacrifice of Christ. Anyone who has communed with a devout Eastern Orthodox Christian, especially an older woman, will understand whereof I speak. On this view sanctification embraces the Cosmos, of which we are a part; a process which God is providentially working in us through the grace of Christ's Cross. The totality of life's experiences in this respect can be viewed sacramentally. This is what the ancients meant by divinization in addition to the union of Christ with our humanity in the Incarnation. The development of Christ-likeness takes place as a morally renewing process which depends upon daily dedicating the whole person, body and soul, to God, and by conforming all human capacities and faculties to Christ and the principles and service of his Kingdom.

9.6.36 Virtue is specific to virtues, to rejection of sin, to spiritual discipline including asceticism, and to good works. The end in view is not harsh legalism, though strict avoidance of sin is a key factor, but love, joy and beauty. Good works do not save, but they of necessity follow from salvation. It is well to remember John Calvin's words, *It is faith alone which justifies, but the faith which justifies is not alone*. Good works are not only *agatha*, that is, deeds which are inherently morally good (*Ephesians* 2:10; *1 Timothy* 2:10); they are, as well, good in the sense of reflecting the grace and beauty of a good character. They are *kala*, literally graceful, noble, lovely. They flow from beautiful people (*1 Timothy* 5:10, 25; 6:18; *Titus* 2:7, 14).

9.6.37 **Devotion**

9.6.38 Prayer is characteristic of the Christian life, but also are a characteristic practice in other religions. The Christian call to devotion is not merely contemplative vision of God which detaches us from worldly concerns; it is vision which issues in action. Salvation is the history of the mighty saving acts of God. Human devotion is no less a response to which is mandated task and mission. Christian prayer does not envision

sublime fusion of the soul with the divine, but finding in fellowship with God the word and strength to endure in faith and to serve.

9.6.39 Christian instinct, like that of a child for its mother and father, is to seek refuge in God, fellowship with God, guidance from God, and strength from God. Enoch walked with God (*Genesis* 5:24). Abraham is called the friend of God (*2 Chronicles* 20:7). Isaiah found inspiration in exalting God (*Isaiah* 40:28-31). True prayer, even momentarily, is to practice the presence of God.

9.6.40 For the Christian, the pattern of devotion is Christ himself. The 'withdrawal' passages of Mark's Gospel are instructive (*Mark* 1:12, 35, 45; 3:7; 6:30-32; 7:24; 9:2; 14:3). The model prayer he taught is used universally by Christians (*Matthew* 6:9-13). Customarily, Christians address prayer to God the Father (*Matthew* 6:9; *Acts* 4:24;); in the name of Jesus Christ (*John* 14:13) 15:6); and, in the power of the Holy Spirit (*Romans* 8:26).

9.6.41 Intercessory prayer engages Christian as co-workers with God. Christians do not see the world fatalistically, but in relation to the purposes and actions of God. Hence they pray, but not as seeking to disorganize the scientifically dependable world God has made; rather with understanding that, alongside its dependability, God has created a world in which contingency and freedom are real, and in which we share a co-worker relationship with God. We pray in faith, leaving disposition of the outcome in God's hands: that there may be ways in which by his providence he can achieve his purposes without either disorganizing his world or infringing upon our freedom and responsibility. We pray because we understand responsibility - that life is made up of occasions of which the right use must be made.

## 9.7.0 **Development of Purpose: Insight and Hope**

### 9.7.1 **Insight**

9.7.2 Insight waters and nourishes faith and hope. Just as insight is crucial to revelation and revelatory situations, so it is equally crucial to Christian maturity. Insight is the cognitive element in faith.

9.7.3 The contrast between light and darkness has been characteristic of religions based on systems of Idealism, such as Gnosticism or its modern parallel, New Age philosophy. The difference between these and Christian faith is that for Christians salvation is not illumination, though it includes enlightenment. Salvation by redemption and renewal lead to understanding. Initial insight is of need, of the need to turn from darkness to light, from sin to the Redeemer, from which follows spiritual understanding.

9.7.4 It is in this sense that Jesus is the Light of the World, or the Illuminator (*John* 1:4, 9; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35-36, 46). The contrasting human condition is that of religious misperception (*Romans* 10:2), confusion of thought (*2 Timothy* 3:7) and contradiction (*2 Timothy* 2:25).

9.7.5 Paul does not depreciate reason. Far from it. This is not his purpose in describing the human sinful condition as one of darkness which can be dispelled only by the light of Christ. His strictures (for example in *1 Corinthians* 1-2) concern the misuse of reason, or arriving at mistaken conclusions, not reason itself. He contrasts the paradigms of the natural man with the 'mind of Christ' (*1 Corinthians* 2:14-16).

9.7.6 Paul perceptively correlates ignorance and the conditioning effects of sinful behavior (David Hume would say 'habits of thought'). *Ephesians* 4:17-24 is instructive in these respects. In order to make his point, in this passage Paul switches from the

illumination metaphor to the concept of alienation, to biological metaphor, to psychological process. Darkening of understanding is due to alienation from God. Persistent sinful behavior conditions the mind even further (the hardening of heart). A new nature, committed to righteousness is, as well, intellectually (let us say paradigmatically and morally) re-orienting. Light and life, reconciliation and renewal, salvation and insight belong together. This is the significance of the contrast between the *stoicheia tou kosmou* (the weak and beggarly elements of this world, *Galatians* 4:3, 9; *Colossians* 2:20) - which I take to identify the purely atomistic or materialistic view of reality and hedonist (behavioral) view of human nature of the Epicureans - and the mind of Christ.

- 9.7.7                    Direction of the spiritual life is by way of insight, which Paul calls *spiritual wisdom and understanding* (*Ephesians* 1:17-18, 3:18; *Colossians* 1:9), which involves renewal of mind (*Romans* 12:2). This is not mere rational insight, or elevation of mind above the unwashed masses through the guidance of a guru; it is spiritual understanding which accrues to and follows from the coinhering life of the Christian with Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit. It is a social concept, and depends upon communion with and dependence upon God. The theological summary of spiritual understanding is *the mind of Christ*.
- 9.7.8                    God's providence is thus not to be viewed in primarily circumstantial terms but in terms of insight of the whole course of history and of one's vocation. There is no point in Paul's speaking of the door to faith (*Acts* 14:27) which had been opened to the Gentiles if neither he nor they could see the door. After all, Peter had at first resisted the notion of such a door of faith for Gentiles. The door of opportunity must be *seen* to be such (*1 Corinthians* 16:9; *Colossians* 4:3). Christian faith does not cultivate the superstitious habit of insisting upon circumstantial indicators, but prays for insight to perceive God's providence in the whole of life. Specific indicators are usually understood to be such only later.
- 9.7.9                    Some practical points need to be made.
- 9.7.10                  Insight develops from deep faith in God's providential dealings rather than from superstitious dependence upon chance events. This combines faith in God as the Lord of creation and the Lord of life. It is usually in the course of grateful living and serving that God providentially sends indicators of new directions. Eliezer was *on the way* to doing his master Abraham's bidding when he found Rebecca for Isaac (*Genesis* 24:27). A generalized conviction or sense of direction or holy (as against self-seeking) discontent will lead to specific opportunity.
- 9.7.11                  Insight follows from an attitude of faith, humility and submission rather than an attitude of strident demand. The faithful Christian does not demand signs. The fact that Gideon demanded a sign on the fleece (*Judges* 6:37) is no tribute to his faith, but to God's patience to reassure Gideon in face of his skepticism. The promise *My grace is sufficient for you* (*2 Corinthians* 12:9) was spoken in the context of the divine *No!* in reply to Paul's petition.
- 9.7.12                  Christian vocation to witness and service has already come universally to every Christian, not by ordination of a special class, in virtue of baptism.
- 9.7.13                  Ego-centricity marks the death not only of altruism but also of insight. Anxiety and depression are often due to self-centeredness. Service expands one's horizons.
- 9.7.14                  Insight is the primary vehicle of God's leading. This is the significance of Paul's phrase, the *eyes of your heart* and *power to comprehend* (*Ephesians* 1:18, 3:18)

- 9.7.15 Faith in God's providence is very much like the relationship of a teacher to a class at the beginning of a semester. One can say that at the beginning of the semester in September the teacher is already in the student's December when the semester will end, because the teacher is already where he or she wants the student to be in December. God is already in the Christian's future. One must therefore not fear life itself.
- 9.7.16 Martin Luther formulated a splendid concept, that of Christian vocation; not in the sense of this job or that, but of orientation of the whole of life and its duties in relation to the conviction of the truth that life can be lived in hope because it is understood to be a divinely given vocation.
- 9.7.17 Christian vocation entails altruism and priestly mediation. While Protestant Evangelicals have properly insisted that the finality of Christ's priesthood made an end of priestly mediation and that thenceforth all Christians are believer-priests (*1 Peter* 2:5; *Revelation* 1:6; 5:10), little effort has gone into fleshing out the positive side of the equation. If one rejects the concept of priesthood as a distinct class, what is the content of the universal priesthood of believers?
- 9.7.18 It rests upon the Christian's dual nature, just as Christ's priesthood could be valid only in so far as he was true God and true man and could place his hand upon both to bridge alienation. The theology of the Christian's priesthood draws from the parallel between Christ's mediatorial functions and our own. In this respect, Jesus' words in *John* 17 are startling (note 17:11, 14-15, 18, 21, 23): *As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.* The analogy Christ draws is precise.
- 9.7.19 Mediate what?
- 9.7.20 Christians mediate the truth of the Gospel, the Word of God, to humanity by means of transformed lives (*2 Corinthians* 3:2-3), and by witness.
- 9.7.21 Christians mediate, they represent (or, they ought to authentically represent) the life in the Spirit, which means to represent what Spirit-bearing humanity is (*Galatians* 5:16, 25).
- 9.7.22 Christians mediate the power of the Cross in their calling, not only to bear suffering *for* Christ, but with Christ - to share his sufferings - which means to vicariously bear evil redemptively (*Romans* 8:17; *Philippians* 3:10; *Colossians* 1:24; *1 Peter* 4:12-13).
- 9.7.23 All of this is based upon the grace of Christ as exhibited in his self-humbling (*tapeinophrosune*, *Philippians* 2:3) and in his selfless service. Christian mediation involves sharing with Christ his burden-bearing pastoral care. Such a life is the ultimate theodicy, the justification of the ways of God with humanity.
- 9.7.24 **Hope**
- 9.7.25 Some years ago, the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung wrote that of the thousands of people he had counseled, he had not found one who did not need one or more of four key elements of personality and outlook: faith, hope, love, and insight (*Modern Man in Search of a Soul*). These are remarkably parallel with indispensable Christian characteristics.
- 9.7.26 Of these, what is hope? Victor Frankl has helpfully defined hope as confidence as to the meaning and significance of life, which he drew from the horrors of Auschwitz where he watched survivors survive because they lived in hope while some who despaired simply gave up and died.

- 9.7.27                    Hope envisions a goal. It is based not only upon vision of a goal but upon confidence that the goal can, and ultimately will, be reached or its significance assured; that the struggles of this life have meaning in an ultimate sense, either in this life or the next. At its deepest level, hope rests upon assurance of vindication; that God will finally judge evil righteously (*James 5:7-10*).
- 9.7.28                    Hope that is realistic involves a three-fold matrix:
- 9.7.29                    First, hope is built upon the foundation of forgiveness. God has dealt with the guilt and judgment of sin. The past has been taken care of. Sin is forgiven. The mind and conscience can be at rest. God's dealing with former transgression clears the way for a fresh start, because forgiveness includes trust that God by his redemptive grace may be able to overcome the evil effects of our sinning, which we in most cases are powerless to do.
- 9.7.30                    Second, hope looks to the future. Christian hope understands history to be linear. History starts with the creation of the world by God and will be consummated with the establishment of God's Kingdom. The promise of righteous judgment fuels faith and hope.
- 9.7.31                    Third, hope concerns the present. Systems of Idealism and Materialism in different ways both lack hope. There is no future for discrete human beings. They will be either terminated by absorption into some postulated higher reality, or they will dissolve into the chemical elements of the physical order. For the Christian, to live in hope means that what we do today as co-workers with God will endure and will shape the future.
- 9.7.32                    It is a remarkable fact that today many Materialists, including Marxists, have retreated from metaphysical and historical determinism and are returning to the concept of a more open-ended universe (currently named the Anthropic Principle). This is testimony that human beings find determinism intellectually unsatisfying and, for many, morally offensive.
- 9.7.33                    Paul sets forward the frame of reference and outlook of Christian experience:

*Therefore, since we are justified by faith,  
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand,  
and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.*

*More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings,  
knowing that suffering produces endurance,  
and endurance produces character,  
and character produces hope,  
and hope does not disappoint us,  
because God's love has been poured into our hearts  
through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.*

*Romans 5:1-5*



# THE CHURCH

Samuel J. Mikolaski

## OUTLINE

- 10.0.0**            **The Church**
- 10.0.1**            **The Quest for Unity in the Face of Diversity**
- 10.0.15**          **Balancing Issues in Light of History**
- 10.1.0**            **Church Types and Denominations**
- 10.1.1**            **The Church Visible and Invisible**
- 10.1.5**            **The Medieval Church Ideal**
- 10.1.19**            **Institutional, theological and social continuity**
- 10.1.21**            **Organizational coherence and stability**
- 10.1.24**            **Sacrament dispensing.**
- 10.1.27**            **Socially inclusive and politically approved.**
- 10.1.30**            **Ritualized, formalized spirituality.**
- 10.1.33**          **Modern Church Types**
- 10.1.35**            **The Episcopal Model**
- 10.1.56**            **The Protestant Reformation Model**
- 10.1.73**            **The Believers Church Model**
- 10.1.105**          **The Concept and Function of a Denomination**
- 10.1.112**          **Baptist Life and Faith**
- 10.1.114**          **The Gathered Church Fellowship.**
- 10.1.117**          **The Authority of the Canonical Scriptures**
- 10.1.118**          **Freedom of Conscience**
- 10.1.121**          **The Lordship of Christ.**
- 10.1.123**          **The Priesthood of Believers**
- 10.1.126**          **Vocation and Lifestyle**
- 10.1.128**          **Mission**
  
- 10.2.0**            **The New Testament Foundation of the Church**
- 10.2.1**            **The Importance of the Church**
- 10.2.5**            **The Theological Foundation of the Church**
- 10.2.7**            **The church is created by the Gospel.**
- 10.2.13**            **The Church is constituted the new body by the Holy Spirit.**
- 10.2.15**            **Its mission constituted the Church a distinctive community.**
- 10.2.17**            **The new person created the new community.**
- 10.2.25**            **The Christian hope created a new view of history.**
  
- 10.3.0**            **The New Testament Concept of the Church**
- 10.3.6**            **Ecclesia**
- 10.3.15**          **Soma**
- 10.3.21**          **Ecclesia in the sense of soma**

|                 |                                                         |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>10.4.0</b>   | <b>Ministers of the Church</b>                          |
| <b>10.4.2</b>   | <b>At Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth</b>        |
| <b>10.4.15</b>  | <b>The Apostles</b>                                     |
| <b>10.4.24</b>  | <b>Gifts of ministry and leadership</b>                 |
| <b>10.4.39</b>  | <b>Bishops, Elders, Pastors</b>                         |
| <b>10.4.112</b> | <b>Deacons</b>                                          |
| <br>            |                                                         |
| <b>10.5.0</b>   | <b>Christian Baptism</b>                                |
| <b>10.5.1</b>   | <b>Baptism yesterday and today</b>                      |
| <b>10.5.46</b>  | <b>Sacrament or Ordinance</b>                           |
| <b>10.5.53</b>  | <b>The theological significance of Baptism</b>          |
| <b>10.5.56</b>  | <b>Baptism and new life</b>                             |
| <b>10.5.60</b>  | <b>Baptism and the threat of death</b>                  |
| <b>10.5.62</b>  | <b>Baptism, reception of the spirit, and the church</b> |
| <b>10.5.63</b>  | <b>Baptism and discipleship</b>                         |
| <br>            |                                                         |
| <b>10.6.0</b>   | <b>The Lord's Supper</b>                                |
| <b>10.6.1</b>   | <b>Eucharistic worship and fellowship</b>               |
| <b>10.6.24</b>  | <b>Words of institution</b>                             |
| <b>10.6.39</b>  | <b>Eucharistic participation</b>                        |
| <br>            |                                                         |
| <b>10.7.0</b>   | <b>The Mission and Functions of the Church</b>          |
| <b>10.7.4</b>   | <b>Worship</b>                                          |
| <b>10.7.9</b>   | <b>Fellowship</b>                                       |
| <b>10.7.12</b>  | <b>Teaching</b>                                         |
| <b>10.7.15</b>  | <b>Loving Concern</b>                                   |
| <b>10.7.18</b>  | <b>Evangelism</b>                                       |
| <br>            |                                                         |
| <b>10.8.0</b>   | <b>The Ministry of Women</b>                            |
| <b>10.8.1</b>   | <b>Unreconstructed Minds</b>                            |
| <b>10.8.17</b>  | <b>The Meaning of Ordination</b>                        |

10.0.0

## **The Church**

10.0.1

### **The Quest for Unity in the Face of Diversity**

10.0.2

The church is the body of Christ in the world. This seemingly clear and direct statement has historically become the springboard for a leap into ambiguity. Controversy, schism, even violence have too often characterized the history of the church, and these just as often obscure its vibrant confessional life and altruistic activities. In what sense can we speak of *The Church*, or are there simply churches of many different kinds?

10.0.3

While not widely known by nor at the time discussed among Protestant evangelical Christians, the small book *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (hereafter designated BEM), which was circulated world-wide beginning in 1982 by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, is, I believe, the most significant attempt in recent times to bridge the gap between Christian traditions and denominations.

10.0.4

A liturgy known as the Lima Liturgy, which included the sacrament of bread and wine, and which was intended to foster and cement unity, was prepared for the ensuing World Council of Churches Sixth Assembly at Vancouver in 1983. It is important to note that some, on grounds of theological difference, even who had worked toward the objectives of BEM, declined to take communion during this liturgy. While the Lima Liturgy has not been widely used since, the theological issues raised and recommendations made in BEM continue to be in the forefront of ecumenical discussion.

10.0.5

BEM emerged from a process which engaged in official theological and historical studies on what divides the churches, including studies of changing attitudes within the Christian communions, with a view to discovering whether there are grounds for bridging the gap between communions.

10.0.6

The method had three main foci: First, biblical and patristic studies as to the concept of the church, leadership in the church, and the theology and practice of the two main sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. Second, an emphasis upon liturgical (confessional) renewal which would call Christians of all communions to publicly and actively "confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (p. vii, quoted from the constitution of the World Council of Churches). Third, to join in common witness to the saving power of God in Christ; that is, to share in communal (for many this means liturgical) experience *before* it can be articulated to the world.

10.0.7

Unity, while it must reflect doctrinal integrity so far as the Incarnation and the triune nature of God are concerned, is seen to be a prerequisite confessionally in a practical, on-going way in the sacraments, notably Baptism and the Eucharist. Such sacramental confessional unanimity is deemed to be the pre-requisite to common articulation of the Christian faith. The report strives for confessional unanimity rather than hierarchical uniformity.

10.0.8

For Protestant evangelicals, questions arise: Is it true that visible unity depends primarily upon such a sacramental pre-requisite? Further, what is the meaning of 'unity'? The thesis of BEM appears to be convergence not organizational unity or uniformity (though Protestant evangelicals naturally fear the emergence of an hierarchy). Perhaps, for some at least, this sounds more like P. T. Forsyth's concept of the 'United States of the Church' than church reunification.

- 10.0.9                    Nevertheless, one must out of courtesy set aside the thorny issue of the meaning of 'unity' so as not to deflect attention away from central theses of BEM which look for convergence on theological, not merely, institutional grounds.
- 10.0.10                    BEM strives for recognition of unity of faith. The appeal is that Christians of all of the Christian traditions *listen for the common faith* in the sense of the tradition of the Gospel which is testified to in Scripture, and which has been transmitted in and by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, if one defers for a moment the issue of 'transmission in and by the Church,' it is clear that here is an appeal for common recognition of the essential Christian Gospel. Thus, how the Gospel is expressed so far as the nature of the Church, the practice of ministry, and theological understanding of the sacraments are concerned is helpfully opened up by BEM, providing thereby an opportunity to discuss, re-affirm, and even to continue to differ about aspects of core Christian beliefs. Recognition of the faith of the Church through the ages is a laudable goal. What consequences flow from such recognition, and what guidance theological conclusions about authentic apostolic faith offer are the apparently never-ending challenge in furthering the interests of the Gospel. Can agreement be reached as to what the New Testament says about the nature, ministries and functions of the Church, which of the New Testament elements retain canonical force, and whether and how these are to be applied to the existing Christian traditions? It is a daunting task.
- 10.0.11                    In-depth biblical and historical studies ought to facilitate leaving behind hostilities of the past, especially in light of changes which are going on in the churches. There is one crucial issue which BEM did not wish to address, namely Vatican and Papal claims to authority, preferring to leave those thorny questions for discussion and possible accommodation to a later time. This was wise, but is nevertheless a critical factor. While BEM aims at catholicity in the sense of wholeness, and seeks to de-sectarianize the concept of wholeness, Papal claims are a significant stumbling block not only to Protestants, but also to a growing number of Roman Catholics.
- 10.0.12                    Protestant affirmation of *on this rock I will build my Church (Matthew 16:18)* insists that the rock refers not to the personal Peter (though one can readily acknowledge the intended pun on his name), but rather that the rock designates the bedrock of truth which he had confessed: *on this rock of revealed truth I will build my church*, i.e., the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The play on Peter's name means 'you have expressed revealed truth and your name is a metaphor for that truth,' but it is the confessed truth upon which the church will stand. Indeed, Peter is careful to make Christ, not himself, the cornerstone of faith (*1 Peter 2:4-8*).
- 10.0.13                    Wholeness cannot mean totalitarian unity nor a unity which is primarily episcopally based. Wholeness must include evangelical faith, and evangelical means more than Eucharistic worship. Protestant and Believers Church evangelicals continue to have misgivings about a definition of wholeness which is based upon a definition of the mission of the Church as primarily sacramental, though there is increased willingness to acknowledge the importance of this for other Christians. Protestant evangelicals insist that mission is related primarily to proclamation and committed, visible discipleship without thereby denying that life and communion witness in their own ways.
- 10.0.14                    Many of the theological conclusions of BEM tend to reinforce Protestant evangelical beliefs about the nature of the Gospel and the ordinances, especially in that form of Protestant evangelicalism known as the Believers Church tradition. Nevertheless, such study is challenging for all Christians to state what a restorationist view of the Church entails. What balance is to be struck between the perceived emphases of the New Testament and the on-going traditions of the Christian denominations which are claimed to be based upon and to derive from New Testament concepts and patterns? It will be important to consider this in relation to the nature of the Church, patterns of ministry in

the Church, and functions of the Church including the practice and meaning of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but by no means limited to them.

10.0.15                    **Balancing Issues In Light of History**

10.0.16                    How does one choose from among the special-interest items of the historical ecclesiastical super-store, especially the shelves marked *Polity*. For example, when and how did bishops (spiritual leaders of despised and persecuted conventicles) become Bishops (religious aristocrats and civil power-brokers)?

10.0.17                    Peter Brown (*Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 1992) argues that this took place during the late fourth century as the pattern of local civil authority broke down under threat of barbarian attack.

10.0.18                    Late antiquity was the period of rapid Christian expansion in a disparate Roman Empire in which local authority played a significant part because of the vastness and complexity of the Empire. Power was shared by a detached central government with local notables. The fourth century C.E. was the era of Christian headiness when Christians, filled with enthusiasm over the conversion of Constantine, buoyed by their changed civil status and the decline in popularity of the pagan shrines, adopted a triumphalist mood: the Kingdom of God had come and they were part of it. The historians Socrates and Sozomenus record this mood in sycophantic detail. Only later, as the barbarian forces overwhelmed the Empire and sacked Rome in 411 C.E., did historical reality sink in and Augustine began his classic re-interpretation of history in the *City of God* in a non-triumphalist manner.

10.0.19                    In the flush of Christian enthusiasm and the threat of outside forces, Christian bishops represented stability. They quickly became local power-brokers. External threat had demanded centralization. From the time of Constantine on, the military was vastly increased, the tax burden soared and, meanwhile, Christianity had become the official religion of the Empire. Gradually, local Christian leadership became part of the tendency to coordinate the economy and interests of the population under one ideological banner, but not in relation to the educated middle and occasional upper class persons who had previously ruled as both formal and informal local regents of power.

10.0.20                    Peter Brown proposes an interesting hypothesis: what Professors of Rhetoric represented locally as the epitome of the culture which as a matter of style kept local nobility in power, became the prerogative of local bishops and lay Christian leaders. As populists - the Church was open to men and women alike, to rich and poor, to the educated and uneducated - Christians quickly overtook the pagan middle classes which were already shaken economically and were too narrowly gauged culturally for broad public support. Christians had the people on their side and Christian heroes were simple, unadorned, spiritually minded types.

10.0.21                    But as professed lovers of the poor and disenfranchised, Church leaders quickly enjoyed the taste of power. Once charismatic, emergent power is acquired, succeeding emergent power is often deemed to be a threat to stability and order.

10.0.22                    This is the era which begat the attitudes which have shaped subsequent Christendom. These include: First, the move to limit the congregation's role in the election of bishops (it should be remembered that in his letter to Corinth at the close of the Apostolic Age, Clement of Rome spoke of bishops as chosen *with the consent of the Church*.). Second, the emergence of a new intellectual elite devoted not to rhetoric, but to theology and theological questions. Third, the control of the charisms, which were neatly limited in power because of their inherently eruptive and unpredictable nature by shepherding them into monastic communities where they could practice their inner light to heart's content without disrupting local church order. Fourth, the emergence of the local Bishop as the local sharer of power with the Emperor. Fifth, and critically important, the gathering of sacramental suzerainty into the hands of bishops: he who

controls the sacrament has power over the souls of men and women who, otherwise, are at spiritual risk.

10.0.23 There emerged from late antiquity that which has become the traditional position of Western Christianity (Roman Catholic and Anglican) and Eastern Christianity (the Eastern Orthodox churches) that the apostolic and patristic heritage comprises the three-fold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons. This is what BEM is attempting to re-establish as a cohering norm for confessional unity, but not in terms of hierarchical uniformity.

10.0.24 It is a striking fact that a parallel three-fold authoritarian ministry pattern is being advocated and adopted in recent years among some evangelical churches in America, including Baptists, to displace the traditional two-fold ministry pattern of pastors and deacons.

10.0.25 The hierarchical nature of the three-fold ministry pattern was challenged from the time of Wyclif and solidified in the various polities of the Reformation and post-Reformation Churches. The struggle between claim and counterclaim is no less fierce today than in earlier periods: What can scholarship yield as to New Testament patterns of leadership (often the fruits of scholarship are remarkably parallel to the received traditions the scholars represent!)? What is the Church local and what is the Church universal? How are key offices of the Church to be defined? What is the role of spontaneity when, for many, respectable orderliness is desirable? Who may discipline spiritually? How can one truly discern who are Spirit-accredited office bearers as against those who are power-seekers, power-brokers or sycophantic power-sharers? Does spontaneity yield anarchy as some claim, and is the defense against anarchy hierarchical control, whether Episcopal or Protestant, or what other form of control is more appropriate? What should be the relationship between religious leadership and authority and civil authority and state power?

10.0.26 Historically, the Church has fashioned itself around three major foci, which have become the ethos of institutional form and ideological commitment.

10.0.27 **First**, the canonical and sacramental authority complexity which characterizes churches of the Episcopal traditions. Authentic, successionist, episcopally authorized sacramental participation (the Holy Spirit is claimed to be transmitted episcopally) is the key feature of this tradition. These along with Reformation State Churches are heirs of the Constantinian State-Church symbiosis. A notable exception is the United States and now other nations which have adopted constitutions that separate religion from the authority, power, the power to tax, and sanctions of the State.

10.0.28 **Second**, institutional and confessional simplicity which is the focus of Reformation, Renewal and Restorationist movements, chiefly of the Protestant and Protestant evangelical traditions. In these traditions, proclamation takes precedence for mission; sacramental practice fosters cohesive church life and personal faith; and, the Lordship of Christ is claimed to be expressed through Spirit-led congregations and emergent and developed leaders who are elected by and responsible to the people under God.

10.0.29 **Third**, the charismatic spontaneity and dynamic emergent leadership emphasis of movements which find it difficult to coalesce into denominational structures and when they do are quickly challenged from within by yet new prophetic voices. These usually coalesce around a personality or prefer to remain as a renewing influence within existing denominations which furnish for them the people, money, facilities and challenge for their mission.

## 10.1.0 **Church Types and Denominations**

### 10.1.1 **The Church Visible and Invisible**

10.1.2 Trivialization of worship, especially in the Western English-speaking democracies, has blurred distinctions between the Christian denominations and obscured the theological roots and the theological significance of their distinctive practices. This trend has been accentuated by religious programming through the electronic media and, now, through computer (Internet) networking. The emergence of the modern 'Electronic Church' raises in new and urgent ways questions about the nature of the church visible and invisible.

10.1.3 Traditional reliance of the sacerdotal traditions upon the 'Invisible Church' concept (which many evangelicals and fundamentalists adopted as the essential nature of the biblical model) is forcing re-evaluation of what the term church means, universal and local. Is there such a thing as the 'Invisible Church' and can there be such a thing as the 'Electronic Church'?

10.1.4 Various forms of mysticism attach to competing claims about the church, whether these claims are basically sacerdotal or non-sacerdotal. All forms of church practice invoke some measure of sacrality. Every form of worship divests its space of profane use, whether that space is a cathedral or a store-front meeting place so as to transform it into a place of worship. Within that space certain rules apply, whether prohibitions of behavior such as noise, eating, drinking, conversation; or expected responses such as enthusiasm or silence, standing or kneeling or sitting, singing or listening or speaking. Such conditions cannot be matched in the isolation of a living room or bedroom. Indeed, it may be asked whether the atmosphere generated by an impersonal tape running through a machine (as most TV religious programs are) is not a prostitution of authentic worship. To reply that worship is essentially the response of the individual soul to God, whatever the stimulus or means, simply dismisses the critical role the concreteness of the body of Christ plays in New Testament teaching. Show business cannot create the aura of mystery and symbolic otherworldliness which are necessary to non-trivial religious experience, whether the form of it is sacerdotal or non-sacerdotal.

### 10.1.5 **The Medieval Church Ideal**

10.1.6 The Medieval Church ideal was remarkable for its coherence and instinct for universality, reflecting as it did in a religious form the coherence and universality (the civilized world) of the Roman Empire. As the Empire fragmented, the church emerged as the *Corpus Christianum* which survived the political fragmentation of the Empire and extended its ministry and message to the barbaric nations at the edges of the Empire.

10.1.7 The modern ecumenical movement has never been able to replicate the instinct for universality of the early medieval church, especially in light of the vast variety of its ethnic and national composition.

10.1.8 Following the granting of full toleration to Christians by Constantine in 313 C.E., the church gradually gained prestige and power in the ancient world. The Roman Emperor had in principle controlled all religion in the Empire as *Pontifex Maximus*, i.e., the chief priest of all cults officially recognized within the Empire. Gradually, religious authority shifted to regional sees and to bishops and finally, not without protest, to the Roman Pontiff who assumed the role of *Pontifex Maximus*.

10.1.9 There evolved the concept of the *Corpus Christianum*, the concept of a Christian civil society, of the state and the church comprising complementary and necessary aspects of a civilized society. 'Realm Religion' or 'State Religion' was born

which, in the nature of the case, quickly raised questions as to the true nature of the church. This happened not only in regard to the status of Christians who had lapsed because of persecution, but also in regard to the growing formalization and ritualization of worship. What is the church spiritually in relation to its claims to universality?

10.1.10 From the time of Augustine there was embedded in the Christian ethos the concept that the Church cannot be exclusivist; that the church visible may include those not fully committed. Who dare be Pharisee enough to judge the genuineness of another's faith? The invisible church alone comprises the pure company of the committed who are known to God alone.

10.1.11 As well, ethnic and national identity received religious imprimatur. To be a Christian meant to be part of the group, through infant baptism, where group meant ethnic identity and nation. People who have not come up through such traditions today cannot comprehend the importance, to say nothing of the dynamic, of such an ethos. It concerns authentic personal identity.

10.1.12 As religion became more formal, more ritualized and more national, there were generated powerful counter-impulses many of which, because they were highly individual, appeared to be quirky and were quickly labeled as dissembling of the common order of society.

10.1.13 The record of a fascinating controversy illustrates issues which I am addressing. A controversy developed in the years before and after 400 C.E. between Jerome and Vigilantius. While most of what we know derives from archives associated with Jerome, the data are intriguing because they bear on questions of what authentic Christianity is, especially in regard to its institutional nature and public practices. The attacks mounted by each against the other were personally vitriolic, some of the differences were ideological (does he support my position?) and not a little concerned public relations image, especially Jerome's anxiety to protect his own image as he sought to collect money for his monastery at Bethlehem.

10.1.14 Nevertheless, serious theological and ecclesiological issues were at stake which Jerome tried to blur, especially whether ritual religious exercises mask religious insincerity or shallowness, and the place of power and authority in the church.

10.1.15 Jerome's letters convey the gist of the matter (note Letter 58 to Paulinus, Letter 61 to Vigilantius, and the essay *Against Vigilantius* in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2, Volume 6).

10.1.16 Following a lengthy visit to Jerome at Bethlehem, which Jerome recounts with pleasure, Vigilantius returned to Gaul and later began pamphleteering against Jerome and his religious practices (with the apparent support, it might be added, of the Bishop of Toulouse). These included: reverence for relics and their use in costly public worship and religious parades, late-night vigils with attendant scandals, the burning of tapers, claims for miracles which could result from ritual participation, and the collection and sending of alms to Bethlehem from communities which needed the money for their own poor. Finally, Vigilantius criticized the idealizing of the withdrawn monastic life and virginity. On these matters Vigilantius asked: if all become monks, who will minister in the churches and to the heathen; and, if all remain unmarried, what will happen to the human race? Jerome quickly responded that the stench of bilge-water had affected Vigilantius' brain, and that his name was better Dormitantius (Sleepyhead) than Vigilantius (Watchful)!

10.1.17 Thus, as religion became more ritualized and formal there were those inside and outside the established church who espoused forms of Christianity which called for deep personal commitment and public, identifiable discipleship. The genius of the Medieval

Church and, after the Protestant Reformation, of the Roman Catholic Church, was a remarkable capacity to allow for diversity which could be accommodated but controlled by the formation of yet new Orders or Movements, but alongside this latitude there developed intolerance for individuals and movements which impugned the universality and authority of the institutional church and, it was thought, jeopardized the coherence of a civil society. The question, What is the true church? was never far beneath the surface of visible, palpable universality.

10.1.18 I add a series of generalizations. In these I attempt to epitomize the structure of the medieval church administratively and in relation to civil authority, and its ideals of sacramental and related theological coherence. After each classification, I add notes on the contrasting ethos of dissenting and reform-minded individuals and groups. Only a detailed analysis of a particular historical and regional context can yield the specificity appropriate to any particular context; nevertheless, the generalizations can serve a useful purpose.

10.1.19 **1. Institutional, theological and social continuity.**

10.1.20 Scripture *along with* tradition and the Creeds is important, but tradition is the more direct and immediately felt influence on daily life. True doctrine is stressed creedally more than the experienced Gospel, except in cases of those devoted to the monastic ideal.

There ever remained a haunting aspiration for restoration of Dominical ideals and Apostolic teaching. The Bible is crucial for life, is more important than tradition, and is crucial as the test of theology and tradition. It is more important to follow the teachings of Christ and the Apostles than to submit to Councils and men.

10.1.21 **2. Organizational coherence and stability.**

10.1.22 Unity and universality must be palpable, Episcopal and hierarchical. There must be the sense of established order with acknowledged authorized leadership. To be meaningful, church unity must be visible.

10.1.23 In contrast, there emerged the view that the principle of the believing people is the true definition of unity and universality. This was the 'salt of the earth' concept in face of political and religious corruption and civil upheaval. Such a view naturally suggests social discontinuity; of separation from disbelieving society in a more radical way than withdrawal into monastic life; and its practice of relying upon emergent leadership and forms of voluntarism which disparaged institutional and hierarchical authority were thought to threaten the core concept of the unity of the church and the stability of society. Such challenges to institutional authority go back at least to Tertullian and the Montanist movement, long before solidification of the early medieval ideal.

10.1.24 **3. Sacrament dispensing.**

10.1.25 The church is the 'Ark of Salvation,' outside of which it was said there is no salvation. The sacraments can be dispensed only by Episcopally authorized clergy or, in certain instances, by laity. The sacraments are the indispensable means of grace for restoration of the soul to God and for nurturing the soul. While faith in principle is called for in sacramental participation, the impulse for Christianity to become ritualized and formal was a significant factor in the life of the church.

10.1.26 Resistance to ritualization took the form chiefly of proclamation of repentance, renewal, with a strong emphasis upon personal faith. Faith must be shown through change of life, evidence of devotion, and altruism. Witness in the sense of a missionary

spirit and study outside of approved circles become resistance techniques, as well as ministry and recruitment techniques.

10.1.27 **4. Socially inclusive and politically approved.**

10.1.28 The concept of a sacral society transferred from Graeco-Roman pagan culture to Christendom. A sacral society is monolithic and optionless. The church becomes the church of the land. It reflects and enhances ideals of social, political and religious stability. Pluralism is regarded as a mortal political, social and religious danger as well as error. Reform is channeled through Movements and Orders which, nominally at least, acknowledge the necessity of societal cohesion while aiming to renew the church from within. Divisions within the church are often serious, theologically, structurally and administratively, but common acceptance of Episcopal authority, at least formally, is mandated. Political and religious power become balancing and counter-balancing forces in society, at times with distinct, even separate, systems of civil and criminal law.

10.1.29 Resistance to mandated coherence centers in the principle of the church as the gathered fellowship, the local koinonic conventicle. It is the idea of the body of Christ in that place, along with retention of the common unity of committed Christians in the universal body of believers, i.e., unity in Christ, or the 'invisible church.' Diligent, individual searching of the Scriptures is not only encouraged but mandated with a view to personal spiritual commitment, public discipleship and lay priestly ministry. The quest to discover the true meaning of discipleship and the true nature and task of the church lead to sectarianism and division. While renewal movements were common within the church, refusal of dissident and sectarian groups outside the church to acknowledge Episcopal authority evoked opprobrium and persecution.

10.1.30 **5. Ritualized, formalized spirituality.**

10.1.31 Nominal religion became common. Little spiritual discipline was exercised, except within the spiritual Orders. Spirituality was externalized through creedal subscription, penances, gifts, endowments, payment of fees, ritual acts and holy days.

10.1.32 Renewal movements demand visible, practical discipleship, with some evidence of life in the Spirit, of evidence of love for Christ through helping the needy, and through works of virtue and grace. Holiness must be morally evident not merely ritualized. One must be willing to bear the cost of discipleship. But as such renewal movements become established they frequently suffer from the same problems which generated their reform efforts.

10.1.33 **Modern Church Types**

10.1.34 Since the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, churches are identifiable as belonging to one of three major traditions or types, with some overlapping of specific concepts between the traditions. These are the Episcopal, the Protestant Reformation (Reformed and Lutheran), and Believers Church traditions. They differ in polity, forms of the ministry, understanding of the sacraments as means of grace, understanding of Baptism and the Eucharist, understanding of membership in the church, understanding of the relation of the church to the State as State Churches or National Churches (except in the United States and some other countries which no longer have State Churches) and, not infrequently, understanding of the meaning of salvation, understanding of whether the canonical Scriptures are the final authority religiously, and understanding of the indigenous and self-governing character of the local church. Despite differences, all of the Christian traditions self-consciously confess belief in the Triune nature of God, in the Incarnate Lord and his saving work of redemption upon the Cross, and belief in his future, final return and Kingdom when the dead will be judged.

10.1.35                                    **The Episcopal Model**

10.1.36                                    Churches of the Episcopal tradition embrace the largest segment of Christendom. Included are the churches of the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the Roman Catholic Church, and churches of the Anglican Communion (the Church of England, the Episcopal Church in the United States and the many other branches of the Anglican Communion, even though churches of this Communion may in important respects be identified as deriving from the impulse of the Protestant Reformation). As well, some churches, though they originally separated from the Episcopal tradition nevertheless represent traditions which are rooted in the Episcopal model so far as the role of bishops is concerned, such as the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Eastern Orthodox churches and the Anglican Church are much more closely identified ethnically or nationally than the Roman Catholic Church which, though often an ethnic or national church, has been able to project a trans-national aura of universality. For example, the Orthodox Churches are commonly identified ethnically or nationally (Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox) while the Roman Catholic Church is known as the Roman Catholic Church or the Catholic Church whether in Spain, Croatia, the Philippines, or the United States.

10.1.37                                    Traditional claims to status and polity of the Episcopal traditions include: The claim that there is but one apostolic, visible, institutional, legitimate Church which is the 'Ark of Salvation.' The claim to sole apostolic succession and legitimacy and the hierarchical role of bishops and priests. Episcopally authorized ministry. The sacraments as the prime means of grace and salvation, which may include meritorious works and penances. Infant baptism to remove original sin or as the mark of the covenant. Inclusive membership. Religious authority including the Creeds and tradition on a par with the Scriptures and claims to authentic Episcopally authorized interpretation of the Scriptures and statements of Christian doctrine. Realm-religion, i.e., the Church is the spiritual side of national life. Rejection, restraint and repression of dissident Christian groups.

10.1.38                                    Modern changes within these traditions have been significant, especially in the Western countries. These include: Reduced emphasis upon the authority of tradition and heightening of the role of Scripture, including lay study of the Scriptures. Efforts to enhance the role and ministry of the laity. Increased argument as to the status and role of women in ministry generally and as candidates for ordination specifically. Moves to revive the catechumenate and to call for personal faith. Moves to rethink baptism and to reduce the incidence of merely ritualized infant baptism and, in some cases, to recover or advocate the recovery of believers baptism. Acceptance of the separation of Church and State where necessary, but continuing to employ the advantages of state power where available in the interests of religion. Efforts to restrict political and theological dissidence among clergy, especially within the Roman Catholic Church. Strong, effective efforts within the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church to conserve the confessional base of these two communions. Conservation of the confessional base of the Anglican Communion churches has been less noticeable and less effective.

10.1.39                                    Efforts to enhance the missionary efforts of the Episcopal tradition churches has been significant, especially of the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. They have successfully mounted a campaign to re-affirm faith on grounds of historical roots; traditional Christian beliefs; a stable liturgy and forms of worship; the continuity of stable, authoritative ministry; claims to universality; and willingness to regard Christians of the other Christian traditions as brothers and sisters in the faith, even though institutionally separated. The evangelistic results of these efforts, especially in the United States, have been significant. For example, many Roman Catholics in the United States disregard pronouncements of the Vatican on birth control, abortion, the ordination of women and the authority of the Papacy choosing, rather, to say, 'this is my faith and my

Church and that is the critical issue for me, regardless of what the Pope says about this or that.'

- 10.1.40 With the winning of toleration for the Free Churches in the United Kingdom and the development of churchmanship in the United States apart from State authority and support, the Anglican communion has adapted to a pluralist society and has long since ceased seeking political power, though the Anglican Church in England is indisputably the heir of religious hegemony which it now handles with considerable discretion. Indeed, friends of mine in England wish the Church of England would be much more assertive theologically, evangelistically and culturally than it has been. The decline of confessional Christianity in England during the past generation has been dramatic.
- 10.1.41 The Eastern Orthodox churches have in some instances in some places in Europe been revitalized, though not to the extent that might have been thought would happen following the collapse of Communist power. The attitude of national Orthodox leaders to dissident Christians, especially evangelical groups, has not always been kind, though in all fairness some dissidents have acted in distinctly unchristian ways; nevertheless, the Orthodox Churches have not in modern times presented a political and religious irredentist threat to other nations, in the same way that Islam and Roman Catholic power are deemed to be threats. Part of this is due to the traditional focus of the Eastern Church upon personal piety rather than on political power, though Orthodox churches have enjoyed the perks of religiously infused nationalism often enough.
- 10.1.42 Perceptions of Roman Catholicism and relations between Roman Catholics and Protestants, including evangelicals and fundamentalists, have been profoundly altered by the Ecumenical Council of 1963-65 convened by Pope John XXIII, commonly known as Vatican II. Perceptions and relations have changed nowhere more than in North America and England. Vatican II was a watershed. The result is new understanding and appreciation, sporadic and sustained dialogue, and greater religious, cultural and political toleration and, in some cases, cooperation - for example, in Billy Graham Evangelistic Crusades. Nevertheless, doubts remain.
- 10.1.43 Generic to Protestant mistrust, subliminally entrenched and almost universally palpable since the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation and Inquisition, is gut-wrenching fear of the possibility, indeed likelihood some believe, of resurgent cultural repression and political persecution of non-Roman Catholics where the Roman Catholic Church becomes religiously dominant, as irrational as modern American Roman Catholics deem this to be. Most evangelical and fundamentalist groups support large numbers of overseas missionaries who, in this century, have frequently reported persecution of evangelicals in Roman Catholic dominated countries.
- 10.1.44 Traditional anxieties among Protestants of all stripes about Roman Catholic religious beliefs and practices include issues such as: The claim that the church through its leaders and traditions is the authorized interpreter of Scripture and can create dogma, rather than that the Scriptures alone are the final authority in the church. The claim to papal authority and infallibility. Objection to what has been perceived as the Roman Catholic concept of grace mediated by measure through authorized sacraments, rather than a relational view of grace and justification by faith alone. Offense taken at the cult of Mary and claims for her as Mediatrix, and at the importance attached to material factors in religion. Insistence upon soul liberty, resistance to censorship and objections to the use of the Episcopal imprimatur and the Index. That religious liberty must include the right to proselytize (evangelize) without fear of persecution by Roman Catholic authorities. Fear of the use of political power in the interests of religion; hence the importance of the separation of Church and State. Concern that the accumulation of power inevitably leads to complacency within religious hierarchies (including Protestant

ones) and to moral and fiduciary corruption. The doctrine of purgatory. And finally, more recently, the appropriateness of appointing an American ambassador to the Vatican.

- 10.1.45 Modern Protestant mistrust, especially among evangelicals, intensified during the nineteenth century because of a powerful wave of Roman Catholic irredentism which included large programs of evangelism to convert Protestants to Roman Catholicism and programs of immigration and settlement of Roman Catholics. Countervailing Protestant effort often engaged the two camps in bitter struggle in a pamphleteering age. The historical and anecdotal data are enormous and must be interpreted contextually with regard to specific regional factors and personalities.
- 10.1.46 A remarkable change has occurred in perceptions and relations between Roman Catholics and Protestants, especially evangelicals. Because fundamental doctrinal beliefs are seen to be congruent more attention is being placed upon those beliefs which unite than upon those which divide the two traditions. The initial impetus was Vatican II which totally changed the ground rules by referring to non-Catholic Christians as separated brethren not as heretics and by mandating cooperative coexistence among all people of Christian faith. Contributing to this change has been the rise of evangelical faith and Bible study among Roman Catholics (including the Charismatic movement) and a new emphasis upon personal conversion; powerful impetus toward lay participation in worship and leadership in the Roman Catholic church; fear of the common threat of secularism in America; and social issues such as divorce, sexual license, homosexuality and abortion which have brought Roman Catholics and evangelicals together for personal and ecumenical dialogue, cooperative civic programs, educational reform, and joint legislative action.
- 10.1.47 Prominent Protestants such as Jaroslav Pelican, G. C. Berkhouwer and Carl F. H. Henry have stressed key elements of faith common to Roman Catholics and Protestants while not dismissing critical differences. One instance was the series of personal theological conversations between Gustave Weigel, the conservative Jesuit theologian of Woodstock College, and Carl F. H. Henry, the founding editor of *Christianity Today* and one of the leading evangelical theologians of this century. Weigel recommended Henry's books to his seminary students and publicly embraced themes of Henry's *Fifty Years of Protestant Theology*, the 1949 address which preceded the formation of the Evangelical Theological Society. It is of interest that Henry and the staff of *Christianity Today* declined to endorse Richard Nixon in the Nixon/Kennedy presidential contest, which Kennedy won, and urged fairness when commenting on the controversy over whether a Roman Catholic President could act independently of the authority of the Roman Catholic Church.
- 10.1.48 Moral and social issues affecting public policy and imperatives of the Christian mission in face of secularization are drawing Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants together, as demonstrated by activities of the Roman Catholic Conference of Bishops, the rise of the Moral Majority and the more widely based interests of the recently formed Religious Coalition, and a number of individual religious leaders and scholars. Noteworthy conferences have been held between Roman Catholics and Evangelical Protestants to clarify differences and common interests, such as the Baptist-Roman Catholic International Conversation (1988) and the consultations between Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics (1992-94) initiated by Richard John Neuhaus of the Institute of Religion and Public Life and Chuck Colson of the Prison Fellowship Ministries.
- 10.1.49 The Neuhaus-Colson consultation comprised Roman Catholic and Evangelical Protestant leaders, acting as individuals. They published the statement *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: the Christian Mission in the Third Millennium* (March 1994), which appeared in *First Things*, May 1994. A number of other prominent Roman Catholics and Evangelical Protestants subsequently have publicly endorsed the statement; however,

several individuals prominent in American evangelical life have declined to do so on grounds that the statement is objectionably ambiguous.

- 10.1.50 The statement calls for convergence between Roman Catholic and Evangelical Protestant Christians on grounds of common faith in Christ, the incarnate Son of God and only Redeemer, as expressed in the Apostles Creed. It postulates *a necessary connection between the visible unity of Christians and the mission of the one Christ*, and pleads for cooperation and contending together on matters of public interest and world mission. A number of unresolved theological issues between (and sometimes within) the two traditions are listed. The authors plead that more unites them on the common footing of justification by grace through faith because of Christ than divides them. The statement ends with an appeal that Roman Catholic and Evangelical Protestant understanding of conversion are congruent and that both sides should concentrate effort to evangelize the non-Christian world rather than to proselytize each other. Nevertheless, there remains the serious ambiguity in the statement that Roman Catholic teaching claims the baptismal regeneration of infants followed by later conversion, while most Evangelical Protestants insist that the new birth coincides with conversion followed by believer's baptism.
- 10.1.51 Roman Catholics and Evangelical Protestants are urged to cooperatively contend on behalf of critical issues, not as religious agenda but as public stands to take for the common good of society. Thirteen are listed: Proclamation of the Evangel. Individual and corporate church responsibility for the right ordering of civil society. Religious freedom (including the right to proselytize). Separation of church and state. Legal protection of the unborn. Conservation of America's cultural heritage in public education. Parental choice in education. Opposition to pornography. Acceptance of one another across racial and ethnic barriers. A market economy in a free society. Renewed appreciation for Western culture. Renewed respect for care institutions of society such as family, church and voluntary organizations. International promotion and defense of democracy.
- 10.1.52 An assumption pervades the document which forms common ground for the participating Roman Catholic and Evangelical Protestants, namely, a necessary connection between the visible unity of Christians and the mission of the one Christ and that there is but one church because there is one Christ and the church is his body. This assumption reflects the view of many northern United States, Canadian and British evangelicals (chiefly independents, Episcopalians, Reformed, and Para-church organizations) that the invisible church is the body of Christ, but this is not the view of many Evangelical Protestants, especially Baptists, who understand the term 'body' primarily to identify concretely the local assembly of believers, as in *1 Corinthians 12:27*.
- 10.1.53 Vatican II and subsequent pronouncements make clear that the Pope regards all mankind as his people whether perfectly joined to Rome or imperfectly related by cooperative coexistence or even hostility. Theological ferment within the Roman Catholic Church and controversy over the nature of authority, especially on the role of women, and the desire among conservative Christians of all denominations for cooperation in face of secularism, have created a unique historical mix. Elements within the Roman Catholic Church are perceived by some to be pressing for recovery of Roman Catholic expansionist strategy. The missionary travels of Pope John Paul are cited. Another example is the republication in 1993 of the 1967 book by Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1977) *Trojan Horse In The City of God. The Catholic Crisis Explained* with introduction by New York John Cardinal O'Connor and approving comments by Chicago's Bishop John J. Myers. While Hildebrand criticizes elements of the post-Conciliar 'new' church, O'Connor emphasizes Hildebrand's call for spiritual renewal against the tide of modern secularism and that ecumenism presupposes profound Catholic faith which embraces all believing Christians.

- 10.1.54           The current renewal of religious faith and concern about the perceived collapse of morality in American culture generally suggests a realignment of Christian sentiment and loyalties in the next few years, which will occur more at the expense of loyalty to the traditional liturgical churches (Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian), but which will not accrue to the benefit of the traditional evangelical denominations. The movement will have deep personal and populist roots and will seek to conserve confessional integrity and liturgical beauty in contrast to objectionable forms of worship, the disorder, and the personality cult syndrome which so often characterize so much of evangelical life.
- 10.1.55           The movement will seek to be rooted biblically and historically. It will aim at confessional integrity in regard to Trinitarian, Incarnationist, and Redemption beliefs, and will be deeply concerned about virtue and values of public discipleship, with little regard for traditional denominational loyalties. It will be Apostolic in the confessional sense, liturgical in forms of worship (quiet but prayerful and joyful, without being happy-clappy), and sacramental in the sense that it is the Holy God who is deigning to meet with his people at His table as the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection and that he asks of his people penitence and deep faith which is life-transforming.
- 10.1.56                           **The Protestant Reformation Model**
- 10.1.57           Two denominational traditions comprise the mainstream heritage of the Protestant Reformation. These are the Lutheran tradition, and the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions (so designated respectively in Europe and in English speaking lands). As a generalization it may be said that Luther and his successors aimed to purge the Church of those things in the medieval church which were fundamentally inconsistent with the Bible, but that Calvin and his successors in the Reformed tradition sought an eccesiology which in principle and in its detail must be justified by Biblical teaching and practice. Each sought to remain the 'church of the land,' the 'national church,' and each retained infant baptism as a cohering factor of that ideal (though Luther accepted immersion of the infant as the mode of baptism, as some of the Eastern Orthodox churches continue to do, and Calvin acknowledged the validity of baptism by immersion). Both reduced the number of the sacraments of the medieval church from seven to two (Baptism and the Lord's Supper).
- 10.1.58           The Lutheran Church displaced the Roman Catholic Church as the national church in parts of Germany and in the Scandinavian countries. Differences between the Lutheran and Reformed Churches include sacramental interpretation (which goes back to failed attempts to reconcile the differences between Luther and Calvin). Luther rejected transubstantiation on grounds that no speaking by men could cause Christ's body and blood to be present in the sacrament, but only the continuing covenantal promise of Christ himself to be present and to make the bread and wine the bearers of his own body and blood where his words of institution are used. Calvin and his successors interpreted the elements as representational and that consecration in the sacrament has to do with persons who express faith in Christ not the elements of the sacrament.
- 10.1.59           While all denominational forms of the Protestant Reformation tradition reject Episcopal succession and authority, they all hold to one side of traditional medieval doctrine that the true Church is One, Holy, Universal (or Catholic) and Apostolic, but not necessarily a visible religious kingdom such as was claimed by the Papacy as the other side of the equation. In principle, both Lutheran and Reformed doctrine hold that the true church is made up of believers, with accommodation on how infants are related to the church prospectively through the covenant of grace and infant baptism. In this respect, the true Church is invisible. The Church Universal and local congregations are not two different kinds of churches. The Church Universal consists of local congregations plus all who are believers in Christ but are not or cannot be attached to a congregation and all who have died in Christ. A local church is an assembly of those who belong to the

Church Universal and who congregate in common faith around God's Word and the sacraments in a particular place, but it may become a mixture including unbelievers. Like some Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, some Lutherans regard others as heterodox, including the Reformed Church.

- 10.1.60 All denominational forms of the Protestant Reformation affirm the doctrine of the priesthood of all Christians but, as well, they distinguish this universal priesthood from special calling to public ministry. Also, they agree that the authority to confer public office on ministers rests with Christians, not an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Some Lutheran churches, and some other Protestant bodies such as the Moravians and Methodist Episcopalians, utilize the term Bishop for senior public office in the Church, with varying forms of Apostolic succession stated or implied, or succession going back to the founder of a particular denomination, even though the form of government espoused is Reformed or Presbyterian in nature. The majority of churches of the Protestant traditions, understand the terms Bishop, Elder and Pastor to be synonymous.
- 10.1.61 Congregationalists and Methodists are part of the Reformed tradition. The former differ from the Reformed churches in their doctrine of the authority of the local church (though they have become more Presbyterian in practice). The latter derive from a revivalist tradition which placed great emphasis upon personal conversion, as Baptists do, but retained covenant theology and infant baptism.
- 10.1.62 Reformed Church membership in the United States comprises chiefly immigrant populations from the Netherlands, France, Hungary and Switzerland. However, they were not a key-factor tradition in the early formation of the American Republic. That honor belongs to the Presbyterian (English and Scottish) and Congregationalist (Puritan) traditions. These were important influences in the writing of the American Constitution (along with Episcopalians who swung their loyalty to the American Revolution)
- 10.1.63 Growth of the Reformation tradition churches has not matched the growth of churches of either the Episcopal tradition or the Protestant Evangelical tradition. Modern changes and trends among them include:
- 10.1.64 Acceptance of the separation of Church and State in the United States, Canada and wherever mandated by law, but retention of the State-Church symbiosis where it is politically traditional and advantageous, as in Scotland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.
- 10.1.65 A re-thinking of the meaning of evangelism as more than the Social Gospel, which doctrine has for much of this century dominated Protestant leadership thinking along with disdain for mass evangelism. A significant exception is the remarkable growth of the Presbyterian Church, along with other evangelical churches, in South Korea.
- 10.1.66 While the Scriptures have always been pivotal in the Presbyterian, Reformed and Congregationalist traditions and there is some renewal of interest in lay biblical study, there are now present theological impulses which identify political and social change along with willingness to look for supplemental revelation beyond the indispensable role of the canonical Scriptures as the major tasks and mission of the Church.
- 10.1.67 There has been considerable debate within the main-line Protestant denominations on how much stress to place on personal conversion and faith for membership. This, along with other factors, parallels significant membership decline in the United States during the past quarter century.

- 10.1.68 Debate over discipleship has also generated controversy over the nature and meaning of Infant Baptism, Confirmation (there has been a powerful sentiment in the United Church of Canada to do away with Confirmation), and the importance of a personal confessional base for Baptism and membership.
- 10.1.69 Recognition of the full role of women for ministry has been spearheaded during the past decade chiefly among the mainline Protestant churches and by the liberal wing of the Episcopal Church. Along with this, mainline Protestant churches have had to contend with the problem of non-acceptance of ordained women ministers by some congregations.
- 10.1.70 A significant factor in the decline of main-line Protestant church membership and outreach has been the loss of the interest of lay men. Attempts at the rejuvenation of this interest has met with limited success. Instead, many are attracted to Para-church movements such as Promise Keepers, but it remains to be seen to what extent local churches will be beneficiaries of such movements.
- 10.1.71 The Protestant churches have suffered considerable distress and division over social questions such as: abortion, homosexuality, feminism, sexual license, divorce, socialist economics and, now, over the political role and ideals of the Christian Coalition. The question as to whether and how much churches should intervene politically for social change is again being vigorously debated.
- 10.1.72 These churches have been committed to the Ecumenism Movement and the World Council of Churches, which interest in recent years has turned primarily into a middle-class religious avocation. Middle and upper class Protestant churches have difficulty ministering to ethnics and the lower economic groups. This is ironic. Despite the commitment of churches of the Protestant traditions to social change, the groups they claim to defend, especially the lower economic and the ethnic classes, largely ignore them so far as religion is concerned.
- 10.1.73 **The Believers Church Model**
- 10.1.74 The dominant heirs of the Protestant Reformation are those who advocated Radical Reform, known in recent literature as the Believers Church.
- 10.1.75 In Europe, the *Unitas Fratrum*, the Mennonites and Hutterites are precursors of the modern tradition. But the single crucial influence was that of John Wyclif in England, and from him John Hus and the radical reformers of Bohemia and the Swiss Brethren who were virtually coincidental in time with Luther and Calvin. Among others, Leonard Verduin has traced some of the continental history and principles of radical reform on the continent, notably in the Low Countries (*The Reformers and their Step-Children*, 1964).
- 10.1.76 The more significant influence of radical reform in America is that of the Baptists from England who, along with Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Episcopalians, and later the Methodists, comprise the backbone of the early Christian heritage of America. But it was primarily the Baptists who brought to full fruition the ideals of separation of Church and State and the vitality of public discipleship identified with the local indigenous church.
- 10.1.77 American Republicanism derives in part from Christianity but it is important not to confuse the views of the Founding Fathers with the Fathers of the Christian faith, because many of the views of the Founding Fathers originated in and were shaped by the Secular Enlightenment. Nevertheless, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison were gradually moved not only to toleration but to separation of religion and the church from the power and authority of the state by the evolution of religious liberty advocated by Baptists. Madison, himself educated at Princeton, knew well the force of anti-

establishment Protestant arguments. But Roger Williams had insisted not only on the pernicious evil of persecuting anyone 'for cause of conscience;' he opposed those who, like the Puritans, sought to establish the Kingdom of God on American soil. For Williams, the church could not, indeed must not, be identified with any nation. And it is this that was ultimately written into the American Constitution.

10.1.78 For the first time in history the ideals of Radical Reform became the model for the creation of a society. The ancient concept of a sacral society was jettisoned in one fell swoop. It happened first in Virginia in the period 1776-1786 under the leadership of Jefferson and Madison. Article 16 of Virginia's Declaration of Rights (1776) says: *All men are equally entitled to the full and free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience.* This simple and direct sentence anticipates everything that later develops in matters of religion and the state in America. It had been written by Jefferson seven years earlier and Madison finally was able to get it passed on January 16, 1786. This is the first bill in history to outlaw religious persecution, to relieve citizens from being compelled to support a religious establishment, and to remove personal beliefs as barriers to public office. Five years later, in drafting the First Amendment, Madison made the ideas of the Virginia statute the law of America.

10.1.79 It had been a criminal offense to deny the validity of the Trinity. Heresy was punishable by death. Free-thinkers might have their children taken away from them. Baptist preachers had been persecuted and imprisoned. Later Jefferson reflected on what had happened in Virginia and reminded the legislators that religious establishments are always oppressive. He argued that the state had no right to adopt an opinion in matters of religion. He wrote:

10.1.80 *The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no god. It neither picks my pocket, nor breaks my leg ... That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or beliefs ...*

10.1.81 Jefferson regarded this statute as one of the crowning achievements of his life. There were found among his papers handwritten instructions about his burial, which read:

10.1.82 *On the faces of the obelisk the following inscription, and not a word more. 'Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the statute of Virginia for religious freedom, and father of the University of Virginia.' by these, as testimonials that I have lived, I wish to be remembered.*

10.1.83 I have no doubt that this is the most important document in American history. It freed the state and it freed religion.

10.1.84 A beautiful parable survives from Roger Williams which illustrates the social and political model which was incorporated into the Virginia Constitution and later into the American Constitution. It parallels views Baptists had espoused in England (such as the views of John Bunyan) on freedom of conscience and religious liberty within a pluralist society. Williams wrote,

10.1.85 *There goes many a ship at sea with many hundred souls in one ship, whose weal and woe is common and is a true picture of a commonwealth, or human combination of society. It hath fallen out some times that both Papists and Protestants, Jews and Turks may be embarked in one ship; upon which supposal I affirm, that all the liberty of conscience that ever I pleaded for, turns upon these two hinges - that none of the Papists, Protestants, Jews or Turks be forced to come to the ship's prayers or worship nor*

*compelled from their own particular prayers or worship, if they have any. I further add that I never denied, that notwithstanding this liberty, the commander of this ship ought to command the ship's course, yea, and also command that justice, peace, and sobriety, be kept and practiced, both among the seamen and all the passengers. If any of the seamen refuse to perform their services, or passengers to pay their freight; if any refuse to help in person or purse toward the common charges or defense; if any refuse to obey the common laws and orders of the ship concerning their common peace or preservation; if any shall mutiny and rise up against their commanders and officers; if any should preach that there ought to be no commander or officers, no laws, nor orders, nor corrections, nor punishments; - I say, I never denied but in each cases, whatever is pretended, the commander, or commanders may judge, resist, compel and punish such transgressors, according to their deserts and merits.*

10.1.86                   What are key Believers Church principles, and in what ways are they prone to distortion and corruption? Who are these people today?

10.1.87                   Doubtlessly they are the largest bloc of Christians outside of the Episcopal traditions and are greater in number than the traditional Protestant Churches. Frequently they are called Protestant Evangelicals, though this can be misleading because Believers Church principles run a collision course not only with the Episcopal tradition but also with the Protestant Reformation tradition. Historically, the main groups of this tradition are the Mennonites and Hutterites in Europe, and the Baptists in Britain, America and other English speaking lands. There derive from their principles many other Believers Church groups such as Plymouth Brethren, Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Nazarene Churches, the various Pentecostal denominations, the Bible Churches, and the vast majority of the thousands of independent and community churches which have developed in recent years.

10.1.88                   The confessional core of the Believers Churches is identical to that of historic Christianity so far as belief in the one, true and living God, triune, and self-revealed in the incarnate Lord, Jesus Christ, as professed in the early Christian creeds is concerned.. However, like the theses of the Protestant Reformation, Christians of the Believers Churches deny authority to the church and to traditions of the church which lie outside of Scripture. They deny that because the Canon of Scripture has been gathered within the life and traditions of the early church that therefore the church through its traditions since then can control the meaning and use of Scripture. They insist that internal Biblical criteria and the Apostolic faith are the norms for judging authentic interpretation of the Scriptures and that the church must ever display a mood of standing under the Scriptures, not of being lords of Scripture. As well, along with the principles of the Protestant Reformation, they deny the claim to and validity of apostolic succession, in favor of authentic succession of the truth of the Gospel, biblically mandated.

10.1.89                   Thus the Bible is central to the Believers Church outlook. The Bible alone is the final authority in faith and practice. It is the unique divine revelation and the sole religious and moral authority for faith and life. The Believers Churches have traditionally sought to be restorationist in mood and intent: the obligation of Christians to understand and live by the teachings of Christ and the Apostles.

10.1.90                   This is identical to the faith of Christians of all ages where that faith has been genuine and life-transforming. Christians of the Believers Churches accept the Reformation criteria of *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fidei*, but they insist that the clear teaching of Scripture be followed in regard to the requirement of personal faith attested to in identifiable public discipleship and Believers Baptism as the condition for Church membership.

10.1.91                   Hence, it is not 'adult baptism' that they insist upon, but believers baptism. Baptism is the sign of faith and new life and the door into the church. The elements of

the Lord's Supper represent the broken body and shed blood of Christ. This model of personal faith and commitment, and continuous nurture of the life in Christ, is the ground for rejecting infant baptism and its consequence, namely, the development of the church into a mixed multitude. The key principle for the on-going discipline and purification of the church is kerugmatic: the call for personal commitment and identifiable discipleship under the magisterial norms of the Scriptures.

- 10.1.92                   The preaching of the Gospel, conversion and the response of faith are thus the key elements in the public ministry of the church, not a sacramental system.
- 10.1.93                   The principle of a Believing People is maintained in the insistence upon regenerate church membership. The voluntarist principle is central. The reforms advocated were, and are, radical: separation from corrupt institutions and a corrupt world to disciplined, Spirit-filled, church-related life.
- 10.1.94                   The right of voluntary association mandates the principle of a composite society and tolerance for dissenters. Included is rejection of the use of state power to endorse or enforce religion, and separation of Church and State politically, judicially and financially.
- 10.1.95                   The congregational principle is affirmed as the governing principle in the church. Pastors and Deacons, among others, are to lead the local church. The term 'church' applies primarily to the local assembly of Christians. It is 'the Church in that place.' While there is such a thing as the Roman Catholic Church, and the Presbyterian Church USA, there is not such a thing as 'The Baptist Church.' There are only Baptist churches, and these cooperate voluntarily in Associations and Conventions of individual, self-governing churches. But their principle of government is not essentially majority vote. It is the principle that the mind of Christ should be reflected in the majority decisions of the membership.
- 10.1.96                   On the Continent, the Ana-Baptist groups such as the Mennonites and Hutterites adopted the stance of pacifism, non-violence, or non-resistance, with regard to war and the personal and civil use of force. Most of them declined to be involved in civil government and they often alienated themselves from society opting rather to live in closed communities.
- 10.1.97                   In Britain and in English-speaking lands Believers Church Christians generally expressed strong loyalties to society and the state. They served freely in the armed forces, approved the enforcement of civil and criminal law, and participated freely in local, state and federal government. Christian-oriented Founding Fathers of the American Republic did not come to America in revolt from the Crown; indeed, they were loyal to the Crown but sought freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. They rejected state-imposed religion. Thus their attitude was that of being fully participant in civil society, of being co-creators of civil society, not of being alienated from civil society.
- 10.1.98                   Traditionally, Believers Churches have advocated and practiced cooperation through Associations and Conventions of Churches in order to more effectively extend the work of God's Kingdom on earth.
- 10.1.99                   What trends and changes are discernible among churches of this tradition?
- 10.1.100                  There is, first, the remarkable development of extensive missionary and influential cooperative programs and agencies which from the days of William Carey, the founder of the modern missionary movement, have had a world-wide impact. These have at times become afflicted with the inevitable inertia which is inherent in all bureaucracies.

- 10.1.101 Separation from the world at times breeds a schismatic frame of mind which follows from mistrust, suspicion, paranoia, and an enlarged ego which is misinterpreted as the will of God.
- 10.1.102 Emphasis upon freedom and emergent leadership leaves churches open to the dangers of the personality cult and the exploitation of churches, institutions and Christians by self-serving religious leaders. Nevertheless, responsibility of leaders to the local congregation or to the churches in Convention is a self-purging factor.
- 10.1.103 Congregational rule on the majority vote premise may be misused (as it was in the case of the church at Corinth, addressed by the church at Rome in *I Clement*). In fact, the congregational principle was never intended to comprise sheer majority rule, but that unanimity or the majority view should prayerfully and carefully reflect the mind of Christ.
- 10.1.104 Success of the composite society principle (which guarantees religious freedom) and opportunity for Christians to pursue vocation under the principles of honesty, prudence, diligence and thrift inevitably produce prosperity which has within it the seeds of spiritual decay.

10.1.105 **The Concept and Function of a Denomination**

10.1.106 Recently, the concept of a denomination has come under suspicion and, not infrequently, of disrepute. Many Christians in the United States now think that the concept is anachronistic and that it should be dispensed with. The media tend to foster this attitude. They tend to favor Episcopal model churches and denominations partly because sacraments and vestments are visually more impressive and partly because there is an established hierarchical structure which can make official pronouncements or furnish cryptic sound bites. Form, order and the impression of continuity usually win over the impression of disunity and controversy which many Protestant Evangelical groups give. Political controversy is the stuff of life for the media, but the media generally find religious disputes unseemly and boring and prefer a positive, esthetically pleasing perspective. There is probably built into this a culture of presumption that if Christians are Christians why can't they agree and get along?

10.1.107 In recent years many Protestants, including some Baptists, have opted for the 'Community Church' label in an effort to avoid the anti-denomination sentiment and, hopefully, to make a broader appeal to the non-Christian public. There are inherent dangers in this concept just as there are in the concept of the denomination.

10.1.108 While a denomination may represent an ethnic or cultural group, fundamentally a denomination represents an ideology as to faith and polity. In principle, there is no such thing as a church of no denomination because there is no such thing as a church without an ideology. It is at least a denomination of one. Every church expresses an ideology as to beliefs, form of government, style of ministry and many other matters. Most 'Community Churches' are of the Believers Church type: they are self-governing bodies, strongly evangelical in character, and require personal confession of faith and Believers Baptism for membership. And, even if they are unaffiliated denominationally or schismatic, invariably they cooperate at least informally with like churches in matters of home and foreign missions, child ministries and education for youth, and the training of a professional religious class through an informal network of individuals, churches and institutions of shared ideology. Thus it is misleading to imply that because a church carries no denominational label it is not committed ideologically. This criticism applies chiefly to Protestant and Protestant evangelical churches or communities of faith.

10.1.109 In a pluralist society denominations are a necessity. Only in a sacral, optionless society can they in principle be prohibited and even there, for example in Islamic societies, there are often competing Islamic religious ideologies and loyalties. Wherever freedom of conscience and religious liberty are allowed denominations are a necessity because finite human beings will always find grounds for disagreement, including whether freedom of conscience and religious liberty should be allowed. But that battle has been won, at least in the Western democratic countries, and there is no going back.

10.1.110 Denominations have had a vital and honorable, indeed, an indispensable role in Western societies. Denominations are the only way we have found as the means by which a society can be pluralist and allow freedom of religion without interference from the state or coercion from high-handed religious authority. There does not appear to be any other conceivable way. The Roman Catholic Church has historically had a remarkable capacity to include under its umbrella many competing views, many of which have become established Orders or Movements within the Church, but one would be hard pressed to make the case that this has ensured unanimity or even unity. If people are to have the freedom to associate freely and to interpret the Scriptures according to their best lights, then groupings such as denominations are inevitable. There remains the fact that if on the one hand hierarchies can become corrupt and oppressive, schism can become paranoid and tiresome. The only solution in view of human finitude and sinfulness is to allow for freedom and to trust that providentially 'God's truth will out' and



- 10.1.121            **4. The Lordship of Christ.** Baptists acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the incarnate Son of God and encourage faith in him as Savior and Lord of life. This entails public, identifiable discipleship which is first expressed kerugmatically in Believers Baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper, and on-going commitment to fellowship and service in the local church. The core of Christian commitment is not only private worship and the development of piety and devotion, but piety which turns outward to witness and service.
- 10.1.122            Baptist life and faith seeks to combine and correlate the functions of God's Word, the ministry of the Holy Spirit and faith in order to cultivate obedience to Christ and the guidance and nurture of the Holy Spirit in fellowship with other Christians in the local church. The congregational principle is not that of the coercive majority, but that the mind of Christ pervade personal life and the life of the local church.
- 10.1.123            **5. The Priesthood of Believers.** According to the Scriptures, every Christian is a believer-priest and is to be of service in the Kingdom of God. All Christians are commissioned to be witnesses for Christ.
- 10.1.124            Leadership in the church is emergent and is then to be trained and developed. Christians are called upon to recognize God-given gifts to some within the congregation and are then to educate and prepare them for vocational and lay ministry roles in the church and to the world.
- 10.1.125            Ordination is an act of the local church which recognizes ministry gifts in particular individuals and their call to ministry and thankfully, along with sister churches, commissions them to ministry. Ordination does not, and ought not, confer special religious status or authority, though no Christian denomination has been able to achieve this goal because it is hard to separate the impact of effective leadership from religious status.
- 10.1.126            **6. Vocation and Lifestyle.** Christian faith includes the belief that every legitimate vocation is God's gift and opportunity, and may be dedicated to God as service for him to mankind.
- 10.1.127            Every Christian ought to dedicate self to the fullest possible development, to diligence and honesty, to the enhancement of the conditions of life for people everywhere, and to a prudent lifestyle which provides for one's own and guides one's own family into a virtuous life, cares for the needy, and altruistically supports the ministry of Christ's Gospel at home and abroad.
- 10.1.128            **7. Mission.** To reflect the love of Christ by nurturing faith, comforting the grieving, helping the broken, and assisting the needy.
- 10.1.129            To live godly lives which are committed to truth, love and righteousness.
- 10.1.130            Christians are entrusted with a mandated mission which is to extend the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world. The goal of this is conversion of people everywhere to Christ, their baptism and call to a life of faith within the fellowship of the local church.
- 10.1.131            To establish like-minded churches which carry forward the ministry of the Gospel.
- 10.1.132            To honor Christian faith wherever it is found (Baptists have never claimed to be the only true church) while promoting the principles of a biblically grounded faith.

## 10.2.0 **The New Testament Foundation of the Church**

### 10.2.1 **The Importance of the Church**

10.2.2 It is ironic that in American evangelicalism, which is supposed to be the home of biblical and restorationist forms of Christianity and biblically based personal faith, the Church is often neglected or ignored, despite the central role it has in New Testament theology and practice. American evangelicalism, especially that form which dominates the electronic media, often fosters, or gives the impression of fostering, a form of highly individual and granular pietism which is detached from the local church.

10.2.3 The Church of the New Testament is not incidental to the Gospel and its role pervades New Testament reporting and teaching. Its reality and functions are frequently triunely related. It is the assembly of God (*Acts* 20:28, where there is strong textual support for either "God" or "Lord") or household of God (*1 Timothy* 3:15). It is the body of Christ (*2 Corinthians* 1:22, *Ephesians* 1:23) and the bride of Christ (*2 Corinthians* 11:2, *Ephesians* 5:26-27). It is the fellowship of the Spirit, sealed by him to the day of redemption (*1 Corinthians* 6:19, *Ephesians* 1:13) and equipped by the Spirit to serve Christ as his body (*1 Corinthians* 12:4, 13; *Galatians* 5:16, 22-23, 25). The Church in the New Testament is a critically important part of Christ's work of redemption and cannot therefore be minimized or ignored. It is a travesty of New Testament teaching to claim that one is part of the New Testament Church (meaning the 'Invisible Church') and therefore that one has no obligation to any assembly of Christians. This is a distortion of New Testament teaching and pious nonsense.

10.2.4 So far as its founding is concerned, Christ loved the Church and gave his life for the Church (*Acts* 20:28, *Ephesians* 5:23). Christ's future coming and purposes devolve upon the Church (*Ephesians* 1:22-23, 5:26-27). And, at present, it is his body - the instrument of his working in the world (*1 Corinthians* 12:4-11, 29-31; *Ephesians* 4:7, 16). In the Apostolic period there was nothing else - indeed, there could be nothing else - but the Church of Jesus Christ. There were no special interest groups, only the Church. There was not a Galilean Fisherman's Fellowship, nor a Sellers of Purple Christian League, nor a Tentmakers Christian Association, but only Christ's body here, there and everywhere, doing Christ's bidding as led and instructed by the apostles. Everyone, of whatever race or ethnic origin, rich or poor, bond or free, educated or uneducated, was part of the local body of Christ.

### 10.2.5 **The Theological Foundation of the Church**

10.2.6 The following are foundational theological principles upon which the Church is built:

#### 10.2.7 **1. The church is created by the Gospel.**

10.2.8 The essential Christian kerugma created the Christian community. The Church exists and functions primarily to proclaim the kerugma.

10.2.9 This follows from the giving, proclaiming and receiving of a revelation, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and distinguishes those who have received the message and those who have not. In this sense, the Church is the called-out-assembly, the company of the committed. Christians are the community of forgiven sinners who have personally trusted Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

10.2.10 Allegiance to Jesus Christ the Lord is the constitution of this assembly. The Lordship of Christ, i.e., that he is God and Savior is the focus of everthing that is

Christian. This is embodied in the confession that *Jesus is Lord* (*Acts 2:36, Romans 10:9, Philipians 2:11*).

10.2.11 Public, identifiable discipleship and admission to the church are sealed by the initiatory rite of Baptism as the mark of the forgiveness of sins, the seal of faith and allegiance to Jesus Christ, the Lord.

10.2.12 This pledge is renewed regularly by means of the Communion rite, the Lord's Supper. Thereby is pledged not only loyalty to Christ in an act which memorializes his death and dependence upon him; it also pledges loyalty to one another and is a continuing pledge of the Christian's obligation to share the Gospel with the world.

10.2.13 **2. The Church is constituted the new body by the Holy Spirit.**

10.2.14 Reception of the Spirit upon conversion separates Christians to Christ and to each other. The concept of the Body of Christ implies the formation of the community of the redeemed. Life in the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit do not signify granular individualism. They are social concepts, but the distinctive character of the community is itself not only a witness; it is also a magnet for misunderstanding and resentment by the world. By means of the Lord's Supper Christians proclaim the uniqueness of their fellowship, that they are in the world but not of the world. That they nevertheless are not enemies of mankind but lovers of humanity is a never to be resolved issue which must be dealt with by each generation of Christians within their own social and political context.

10.2.15 **3. Its mission constituted the Church a distinctive community.**

10.2.16 The core meaning and mission of the Christian faith is not that of a ritual performed and prayers spoken by devotees in a consecrated place, but devotion to the personal God in Christ which evokes action. The Gospel constituted Christians a distinctive community with the mandate to disseminate a message. And that message is the Word of God in Christ for the world. This supersedes ritualistic religion as practised in the Temples with a spiritual religion based on vital theological and moral principles. The 'People of God' are marked by their response to the Word of God, and their task remains to preach and live that Gospel.

10.2.17 **4. The new person created the new community.**

10.2.18 Redemption has in view the new creation (*2 Corinthians 5:17*). Christian distinctiveness concerns first and foremost a moral quality of life. It is a call to the sanctified life (the *hagioi*). Through the Gospel a moral dynamic was released into the world. The ancient schools had many worthwhile, noble ideals but failed to furnish the motive force needed to recreate fallen human nature.

10.2.19 Christian commitment entails moral renewal in personal ethics, in business integrity, in the marriage relationship, in parenting, in treatment of the aged, and in purity of worship (as against the appeal to eros and erotic practices in pagan worship). Christianity outlived, outdied and outsang the ancient world.

10.2.20 There follows the testimony and appeal which Athenagoras made in his *Plea* to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, himself a philosopher, and to his son Commodus, at about 175 C.E. (from the Preface and Section 11),

10.2.21 *Your Most Excellent Majesties...the whole Empire through your wisdom enjoys profound peace.*

10.2.22 *But you have not cared for us who are called Christians in this way. Although we do no wrong, but, as we shall show, are of all men most religiously and rightly*

*disposed toward God and your Empire, you allow us to be harassed, plundered, and persecuted, the mob making war on us only because of our name...*

10.2.23 *And yet who of them (philosophers) have so purified their own hearts as to love their enemies instead of hating them?...*

10.2.24 *On the contrary, they ever persist in delving into some harm, making skill in oratory rather than proof by deeds their business. With us, on the contrary, you will find unlettered people, tradesmen and old women, who, though unable to express in words the advantages of our teaching, demonstrate by acts the value of their principles. For they do not rehearse speeches, but evidence good deeds.*

10.2.25 **5. The Christian hope created a new view of history.**

10.2.26 Against the fatalism of the Stoics and Epicureans, Christians witnessed to a teleological view of life and history. Life is to be lived in relation to ends. The movement of history is tied to the purposes of God. History is not purposeless. It moves from Creation through Redemption to the Consummation of the final Kingdom following Christ's second coming. Christians are commanded not to despair but to live in hope.

10.2.27 This means that life can be lived purposefully. There is a point to what Christians plan and do and the ideals to which they aspire. The totality of all that is accomplished in life under the providence of God will not irrevocably collapse in the grave. There will be a final reckoning when God will be justified in his ways with humanity and his purposes in history. Christian hope displaced fatalism and apocalyptic despair.

10.3.0 **The New Testament Concept of the Church**

10.3.1 Four terms may be referred to in the New Testament whose use or non-use enable one to arrive at an understanding of the New Testament concept of the church. The latter two yield positive understanding as to the nature of the church; the first two are useful as contrasts. There is also the term **sunerchomai** which simply identifies the act of assembling or coming together.

10.3.2 First, the term **sulloge**. This term is used for a gathering up, or collection of a class of objects or persons but once gathered the gathering does not constitute a social entity or body politic. Examples include the gathering of one kind of produce as against another (*Matthew 7:16*), of sorting the good from the bad when fishing (*Matthew 13:48*), or of gathering tares in the final judicial winnowing (*Matthew 13:30-31, 41*).

10.3.3 Second, the term **sunagoge**, the nominal form of which in English becomes synagogue. The verb **sunago** simply indicates a gathering or bringing together, while the noun identifies the gathering itself. Most commonly, it identifies an assembly of Jews for worship or instruction or, by metonymy, the building in which their assembly is held. Apart from *James 2:2* it is not used of Christian assemblies. This is significant. It suggests allowance for commonly accepted Jewish usage of the term for their place of meeting, the Jewish congregation of the synagogue, or the Jews of a city or community.

10.3.4 Third, the term **ecclesia**. This term, along with **soma**, is crucial to an understanding of the nature of the church in the New Testament.

10.3.5 In both general and specifically Christian use **Ecclesia** signifies an assembly of persons who duly constitute a civil entity, an organization, or a social compact. For example, in *Acts 19:32, 39, 41* it signifies a properly convened meeting of the citizens of the city of Ephesus. Nevertheless, it is fascinating to note in this passage that Luke speaks not only of a duly constituted meeting of citizens as an *ecclesia* but also that the

clerk of the city dismissed the irregular assembly (*ecclesia*) of citizens who had gathered in the stadium to protest the activities of Christians. The fact that reference is made to the confused assembly and, by implication, to that assembly as unlawful simply reinforces the prime sense of the term's use which is the regular meeting of a duly constituted organization or body of people who properly belong to it.

10.3.6 In this respect it is also used of the community or nation of Israel in the Septuagint of *Deuteronomy* 4:10, 23:3, whether they are assembled or not, and in *Acts* 7:38 and *Hebrews* 2:12.

10.3.7 The main use in the New Testament is to identify assemblies of Christians, in two senses. First, to identify the act of meeting and the fact of being in a meeting, i.e. *when you meet*, or, *in the meeting* (*1 Corinthians* 11:18; note also 14:19, 34, 35); and, second, to identify local assemblies or communities of Christians.

10.3.8 This second use is crucial. It is specific to local churches or communities of Christians.

10.3.9 But there is, apparently, a collective sense, for example, that Paul made havock of the church, *entering every house* (*Acts* 8:3). Does this mean homes of individual members who belonged to one assembly, or does *ecclesia* here signify many house churches or conventicles? Note also *Matthew* 18:17.

10.3.10 What of the collective, universal or general use of *ecclesia*? This includes Jesus' promise, *I will build my church* (*Matthew* 16:18) and Paul's statement that he had *persecuted the church* (*1 Corinthians* 15:9, *Galatians* 1:13, *Philippians* 3:6); note also *1 Corinthians* 12:28, *1 Timothy* 3:15, and use by the writer of *Hebrews* 12:23). *Ephesians* 1:22-23 is a critical passage. Here Paul speaks of *the church which is his body*. This usage pinpoints the difficult issue of the sense in which the church as the body of Christ is local and the sense in which the term body is being used generally, collectively or universally. It is more than a linguistic matter, raising, as it does, the important metaphysical issue of the one and the many.

10.3.11 Specificity and the reality of a duly constituted organization are the significant aspects, whether *everywhere in every church* (*1 Corinthians* 4:17), or by name, such as the church at Jerusalem (*Acts* 8:1), the church at Cencreae (*Romans* 16:1), the church of the Thessalonians (*1 Thessalonians* 1:1), the church in Nympha's house (*Colossians* 4:15), in Philemon's house (*Philemon* 2), in the house of Prisca and Aquilla (*Romans* 16:5), or in the plural form (*Acts* 15:41; *Romans* 16:16; *1 Corinthians* 7:17, 14:33, 16:19). The prime use of *ecclesia* is to identify organized specific local assemblies of Christians; it identifies both the reality and the activity: *the coming together of the assembly* (*1 Corinthians* 11:18).

10.3.12 Local specificity is no longer in question as the significance of *ecclesia*. Whatever collective sense is imputed must take into account local church reality as the expression of what church in general means. Of the many citations that could be made, I quote the conclusions of L. Coenen from his article 'Church' in the *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (C. Brown, ed., ET 1975; hereafter designated DNTTh), pp. 299, 301:

10.3.13 ...Hence *ekklesia* can be thought of in purely concrete terms, and any spiritualizing in the dogmatic sense of an invisible church (*ecclesia invisibilis*) is still unthinkable for Paul ... The *ecclesia* has its location, existence and being within definable geographical limits ... The *ecclesia* is always described and ordered in terms of its particular, local form.

10.3.14 Fourth, the term **soma**. This term has widely varied uses. Without multiplying references and instances, I will simply summarize: It is used of a dead human body or of

a living human being; of the bodies of animals living or dead; of any corporeal substance (as in *Colossians* 2:17); or, as a metaphor for a number of persons who are united by a common bond.

10.3.15 In the New Testament its prime use is of the Church as the body of Christ. To say that this use signifies a spiritual body does not advance our understanding very much. Examples of use include:

10.3.16 Paul says that *we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another* (*Romans* 12:5). Retreat to mysticism as to the meaning of this is not helpful. Paul is saying that they each one, concretely in that local situation, belong to one another (a coinhering life) and that if he were there he too would be part of it. In a general sense all Christians belong to the common fellowship of Christians, but to define body only or primarily in the collective sense is to do a disservice to the text because all of the gifts he is speaking about in the passage call for local development and utilization.

10.3.17 Surely Paul's use of 'we' rhetorically signifies the local body. In *1 Corinthians* 10:16-17 he speaks of the bread which symbolizes Christ's body and goes on to say that just as the loaf is one so *we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread*. This is not a mystical partaking, but the partaking by the body of Christians at Corinth, of which Paul would be a part as well, were he there among them. The generalization is useful and cohering, but the reality must be specific and concrete.

10.3.18 This is the sense in which the rhetorical 'we' must be understood. Baptism by the spirit, coincident with Believer's Baptism (*1 Corinthians* 12:13) is baptism into the body of the church concretely, not into a mystical body. Indeed, one is hard pressed to comprehend what a mystical body is. It is in the making of the collective concrete that Paul's use of soma is to be best understood (note also *Ephesians* 1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12; 5:23, 30; *Colossians* 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15).

10.3.19 Unless the concept of the body of Christ is related to a specific local body we distort Paul's metaphor of the body in *1 Corinthians* 12 and his teaching about its concrete functions. At the end of his discussion Paul concludes (v.27), *Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it*. English translation of this text is difficult because Paul uses the anarthrous construction. It is technically not correct to translate *the body* because the definite article is not present in the Greek text, and it is disingenuous to translate it *a body* because the Greek does not have the indefinite article though this is the thrust of the passage. Thus a translator must compromise between the two, which the RSV has done by rendering it *you are the body of Christ*. Paul is saying, *You at Corinth are a body. You should understand that you must function as a complete body, of which Christ is the head*. Otherwise we make nonsense of his metaphor. He does not mean that Corinth is an arm, or that Ephesus is a foot, or that Colosse is an ear. He means that at Corinth and at Ephesus and at Colosse there is a functioning body, as a whole, of which in each case Christ is the head.

10.3.20 We can now draw this discussion of the New Testament concept of the church to a conclusion. It is this: *Ecclesia is defined in the New Testament in the sense of soma*. This is the genus and the species.

10.3.21 Negatively speaking, *ecclesia* in the New Testament does mean a duly constituted body politic, but not merely in the sense of a social convention. In those days the citizens of a city state who assembled in the stadium to constitutionally conduct business were an *ecclesia*, as were members of any fraternal organization, such as a professional or trade association or a burial society. In this respect we today could say that the members of a Rotary Club, or a Camera Club, or the Employees Association of a corporation who meet to decide matters which concern them, are each an *ecclesia*. But such social and business compacts are merely social conventions - they are organized and

exist in the interests of a particular group for a time. They do not have a necessary status in reality.

10.3.22

Positively speaking, the church is more than a social convention, more than a body politic. It is an *ecclesia* in the sense of being a *soma*; a called-out-assembly in the sense of constituting a local body. This is not merely a social convenience with a constitutional foundation and purpose. It is an entity of coinhering life of which Christ is the head. I do not think that anyone is wise enough to sort through the metaphysical implications of this so far as the problem of the one and the many is concerned, but one must not minimize the reality of the local body in the interests of a theory of the invisible church. Historical, empirical concreteness is critical to an understanding of what the church is, local and universal.

10.3.23

The Church is Christ's body in that place. In their citations of usage, Liddel and Scott (*Greek-English Lexicon*) show that *ecclesia* means the summoning of a duly constituted assembly (*ecclesiasmos*), probably in the hall of the *ecclesia* (*ecclesiaterion*) by those who are members of the *ecclesia* (*ecclesiastes*). Most important, they comprise a register, such as a register of voters (*ecclesiastikos pinatz*), who are publically listed as members or voters. Similarly, the church is a local assembly of believers, known, identified, who enjoy the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of their membership and calling.

10.4.0

## **Ministers of the Church**

10.4.1

Universality of priesthood is shown by the wide diversity of gifts and ministries present in the apostolic churches and exercised by the membership. But fundamentally, universality is grounded in the concept of the body. Like the functioning parts of a body, each Christian is not only a part of the body, he and she are expected to fulfill the functions which are assigned to that part of the body under the headship of Christ.

10.4.2

### **At Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth.**

10.4.3

At Jerusalem, the first Christian church was led by the twelve apostles (*Acts* 6:2). Quickly, seven men were appointed to assist the apostles. While the seven are not specifically called deacons, it is likely that this marks the inception of the diaconate (*Acts* 6:1-6). Along with the apostles were elders (*Acts* 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6; 16:4; 21:18) who together with the whole church (6:2; 15:22, 30) reached conclusions and made decisions (15:22). On his first missionary journey Paul appointed elders in each newly formed church (*Acts* 14:23). The term elder may reflect early Jewish orientation of the mission, prior to Paul's later turning to the Gentiles and his frequent use of the term bishop. The function of prophets is a hotly debated matter (*Acts* 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10; *1 Timothy* 4:4) as to whether it was predictive in relation to the life of Christians, hortatory or to furnish insight, but it does not appear to have been revelatory so far as the essential truth of the Christian faith is concerned. The revelation was a given. Understanding of the person of Christ and interpretation of the *kerugma* rested with the Apostles.

10.4.4

Based upon *Ephesians* 4:11, some have proposed an interesting hypothesis in view of the fact that the mission of the church beyond the Jewish-Christian enclave at Jerusalem in the nature of the case necessitated the appointment of local leadership in the far reaches of the Roman Empire. In this passage Paul uses the emphatic 'he' to say that Christ gave gifts of office and leadership to the church, namely, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The hypothesis is that the role of the evangelist here, there and everywhere in the Empire created the conditions by winning converts which necessitated the move from direct administration by the apostles and injunctions from prophets to the appointment of local pastors and teachers. (It is a nice question as to whether the latter two are two distinct offices or whether the passage should be translated to read pastor-teacher; note also *Acts* 13:1, the extension of the church to Antioch.)

10.4.5

How should one tackle the diversity of ministries and offices which are alluded to in the New Testament? First, I list offices and functions which are mentioned only casually, about which the texts are unspecific, which may very well have fallen quickly out of use, but whose importance may, nevertheless, be obscured by lack of data.

10.4.6

Early Christian leaders referred to themselves as 'bond-servants' (slaves) of Jesus Christ (*Romans* 1:1). This term does not designate an office, only the stance of servanthood, though the term *diakonos* (which also designates the office of deacon) was used widely in the general sense of servanthood.

10.4.7

John Mark was an 'assistant' (*huperetes*, *Acts* 13:5) on the first missionary venture, until he quit. Assistant means either travel companion and helper or, more likely, a discipling or teaching assistant to help with the evangelistic and church-planting task.

10.4.8

There were 'leaders' (*egoumenoi*) in the church. This general term refers to several offices (*Acts* 15:22; *Hebrews* 13:7, 17, 24) or to persons who were suitable candidates for specific office. At Lystra the term is used of Paul as the chief speaker of the evangelistic band by the newly won listeners and converts (*Acts* 14:12).

- 10.4.9 Two terms (*oikonomos, epitropos*) are used in the general sense of stewardship, or household management. For example, *Luke* 12:42; 16:1; *1 Corinthians* 4:2 in regard to *oikonomos*. Such a function is attributed to Christian ministers (*1 Corinthians* 4:1; *Titus* 1:7) and to Christians generally (*1 Peter* 4:10). Similar functions apply to *epitropos* (*Matthew* 20:8; *Luke* 8:3; *Galatians* 4:2), although it is not used specifically of Christian service.
- 10.4.10 Finally, there were senior widows who fulfilled specific pastoral duties (*1 Timothy* 5:3-16). This extended, ignored passage offers instructive insights on the role of senior, wise and stable women in the caring and counseling ministries of churches, in contrast to the one-on-one, male-dominated pastoral services which have evolved among Episcopal and Protestant churches. (It is said that by the third century C.E. the church at Rome was supporting over 250 widows who were active in family ministries.)
- 10.4.11 It seems evident that bishops and elders and pastors, along with deacons, are the key officers of the newly established churches. The role and ministry of prophets appears to quickly subside. I add the following generalizations, regionally referenced:
- 10.4.12 *1 Peter* was probably written to churches in northern Asian Minor. In this letter the term used is elder with distinct pastoral, or overseer stress placed upon it (*1 Peter* 5:1-5).
- 10.4.13 In western Asia Minor, notably in the large Christian communities of the Ephesus area, the terms elder and bishop are used interchangeably. This is clear from *Acts* 20:17, 28. The same occurs in *1 Timothy* 3:1-7; 4:14; 5:17-20 and in *Titus* 1:5, 7. There is also the important reference in *Ephesians* 4:11, previously cited.
- 10.4.14 In Europe the pattern is similar. Paul emphasizes the role of apostles, prophets and teachers to the Corinthians (*1 Corinthians* 12:28). This appears to stress the founding role of the apostles and prophets and Paul's desire that teaching become the vocational ambition of the Corinthian Christians, not aspiration for exotic gifts. In *Philippians* 1:1 Paul addresses bishops and deacons, which may be regarded as the usual pattern of the churches, especially as the terms bishop, elder and pastor may be viewed as synonyms so far as ministerial functions are concerned - which is the conclusion to which I move.
- 10.4.15 **The Apostles**
- 10.4.16 It is a truism to say that the twelve apostles are the foundation of the church (*1 Corinthians* 12:28; *Ephesians* 2:20, 3:5; *2 Peter* 3:2; *Jude* 17; *Revelation* 21:14). By this is meant that they, *The Twelve*, were chosen by Christ himself to implement the world mission of the Gospel. As his original followers who knew him personally, and were chosen for leadership by him, they are the authentic interpreters of who the historical Jesus Christ is and of his message. Thus the Scriptures of the New Testament are canonical in the sense that they are written by apostles or those directly associated with them.
- 10.4.17 In both the Septuagint of the Old Testament and in the New Testament the term apostle (*apostolos*) signifies an authorized messenger or representative. In this general sense any official emissary may be designated an apostle, but to take this as license to call any subsequent church official an apostle in the sense of The Twelve is perverse. The term 'Apostle' in the Christian church is properly restricted to The Twelve who have a unique relation to Christianity in general, past, present and future, even though it is used of men outside the apostolic circle, as in the case of Barnabas (*Acts* 14:14) and, apparently, of Sylvanus and Timothy (*1 Thessalonians* 2:6). The designation occurs once in *Matthew* (10:2), *Mark* (6:30), and in *John* (13:16 in the general sense), but more frequently in *Luke-Acts*. Luke is at pains to affirm the apostolic credentials of Paul (*Acts* 9:1-19; 22:1-21; 26:2-18; note *Romans* 1:1; *Galatians* 1:1, 11-17; *1 Timothy* 2:7).

- 10.4.18 Paul and Luke make clear that the Apostles sustain a unique, universal relation to the Church. They are the guardians of the truth about Christ and of the Gospel. There can be no other independent authorities. For this reason the distinction drawn is between apostleship in the general sense of messenger, and apostleship in the specific sense of The Twelve.
- 10.4.19 Their status and authority is based upon a number of critical factors: They were called directly by Christ himself (*Luke* 6:13; note *Acts* 1:17) and had been his companions throughout his public ministry. They were best placed as to what the historical Jesus had said and done. They had seen the risen Christ (*Luke* 24:36; *Acts* 1:3). They were initiators of the mission Christ had entrusted to them and were directly and crucially involved in the controversies and decisions of the founding Christian assemblies: selecting leadership (*Acts* 14:23; 16:1-5); ratifying decisions (*Acts* 15:2, 13), and opening the mission to the Gentiles (*Acts* 10:1-17, 34-35).
- 10.4.20 Theirs was the task not of inventing dogma, but of conserving and communicating that which Christ had left to them. Their relationship, and only theirs, is universal to the Church. It is clear that the Apostles were not inventors of Church doctrine or law, but were mandated to stand under Christ's law and to transmit the authentic Gospel authentically.
- 10.4.21 As already cited, Paul laid claim to apostleship on grounds of Christ's individual call and commissioning. He, too, had met the risen Lord (*1 Corinthians* 15:7-8; *Galatians* 1:16). He, too, serves as a conduit for the Gospel (*1 Corinthians* 11:23; *2 Corinthians* 5:20; *Galatians* 1:12; 2:7-8). He, too, is given special insight into the mystery of Christ (*1 Corinthians* 4:1; *Ephesians* 3:1-6); namely, that the Gentiles also were to become members of the household of faith.
- 10.4.22 Apostolic authority is not blank successionist authority. It is basically not even the authority of dominical appointment. Rather, it is dominical appointment as conservators of the mandated message - of the truth and power of the Gospel - which lends credence to apostolic authority. It is the authority of the true Gospel that is apostolic, not the authority of men. They, like Peter, at times needed correction, as in the case of his resistance to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the household of faith (*Acts* 10; *Galatians* 2:11-21).
- 10.4.23 Despite their unique position, the apostles did not exercise their authority in a despotic manner though they did serve as canons of the truth. It was collegial. They, along with the Elders and the Assembly of Christians, prayerfully together sought the mind of Christ on vexing questions (*Acts* 15:6, 12, 22).
- 10.4.24 **Gifts of Ministry and Leadership**
- 10.4.25 Since its inception there has been a tension in the church between claims to exotic gifts and the demands of order and propriety in the assemblies. Paul deals with what has become a representative form of the problem in his first letter to the church at Corinth (*1 Corinthians* 12-14). To grasp the full meaning of what Paul has to say, these chapters must be studied together as forming one systematically developed argument.
- 10.4.26 Paul begins (12:4-6) by establishing the Trinitarian base of gifts: the distribution of gifts, the varieties of service and administration, and the varieties of working are each, respectively, a derivative of the Holy Spirit, the Son, and the Father, i.e., the one God who is author of the multiplicity of operations.
- 10.4.27 In each case (12:7) the gift is given *with a view to profiting*, i.e., the good of all, not merely the self-satisfaction of the bearer. He then (12:8-10) identifies three gifts,

namely, wise insight, utterance of knowledge and heroic faith. Then he appears to add that which may follow from heroic faith, in pairs: gifts of healing and miraculous powers, prophetic utterance and capacity to critically distinguish between spirits, various kinds of tongues and their interpretation. In passing, it may be noted that Paul does not speak of a generic 'gift of healing,' but seems to imply that any healing is in particular a gift (thus no one can properly claim to have 'the gift of healing'). Whether tongues are languages or glossalalia I leave for discussion elsewhere, but *interpretation* does not mean translation. It means reading the mood or emotions of the speaker.

- 10.4.28                Following his analogy of the body and the necessity that each person function harmoniously within the local body of Christ, in this case at Corinth (12:27), he lists the founding gifts to the church of leaders (apostles, prophets, teachers) and then quickly moves *down a scale of values* from the prime gift of teaching to: workers of miracles, gifts of healing, helps, administration, tongues. He finally reaches his goal, which is love as the more excellent way (12:31, followed by chapter 13) which is mandatory and *alone* is universal. In his downward defining scale Paul places last those things which the Corinthian Christians prized most and then moves to love in which they are deficient.
- 10.4.29                The only possible answer to the rhetorical questions of 12:29-30 is 'No.' It is simply *not* the case that apostleship, prophecy, teaching, wonder-working, gifts of healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues are universal, but love is.
- 10.4.30                Nevertheless, he says, they should aspire to the greater gifts (14:1) the greatest of which, beyond love, is teaching: 14:1 follows from 12:31. Then he discusses the primacy of teaching, effective communication and comprehension, and order in worship in chapter 14. His strictures against disorder in public worship are sharp, and his support of the basic principle that edification is the goal is strong (12:26). He concludes with a sharp rebuke (14:35-40): Who do you think you are? Did the Gospel originate with you? Are you the norm of spirituality and of the gifts? What are you trying to prove? Or, should you not be following the teaching and tradition you have received? It is clear from *I Clement*, written some forty years later from the church at Rome to the church at Corinth, that the church at Corinth had grasped the apostolic teaching inadequately, if at all.
- 10.4.31                The problems indicated and issues raised in these chapters recur in every century of the history of the church. Paul is dealing with the error of the pursuit of the exotic, the sin of spiritual pride, and the spiritual anarchy which results if every Christian who believes he or she has a charisma is allowed to exercise it without consideration for the good of all. For Paul's additional comments on the right use of spiritual gifts note his exposition in *Romans* 12:3-9.
- 10.4.32                What is a gift (the Greek term is *charisma*, used directly in English)? The most prevalent error is to separate gift from talent. This amounts to a denial of the doctrine of creation and providence. *Charisma* include all spiritual gifts and talents. The range of use in the New Testament is impressive.
- 10.4.33                Included are: Any act of service (*Romans* 12:6-7; *I Peter* 4:7-11). Some favor or blessing, such as deliverance from peril (*2 Corinthians* 1:11). Sexual continence or celibacy as a way of life (*I Corinthians* 7:7). A spiritual truth or truths (*Romans* 1:11). The abiding gifts and privileges of Israel (*Romans* 11:29). Salvation itself (*Romans* 5:15-17).
- 10.4.34                There is an intimate relation between a gift and a talent. In the context of his discussion of the gifts Paul speaks of improvisation, earnest desire for the greater gifts, and cultivation of gifts (*I Corinthians* 12:31; 14:1, 26).

- 10.4.35 The gifts are diverse. There is great variety, which is related to ministry needs and opportunities (*1 Corinthians* 12:4-10).
- 10.4.36 Limitation is imposed. They are not all possessed by everyone. Note, again, the rhetorical questions which follow *1 Corinthians* 12:29 which require a negative answer.
- 10.4.37 The giver is God. He is Lord of gifts. They are apportioned triunely in relation to the divine purposes in ministry (*1 Corinthians* 12:4-11).
- 10.4.38 Gradation is involved, and there is a more excellent way (*1 Corinthians* 12:31). The Corinthian Christians should desire the greater gifts. They should aspire to that which is permanent, not that which is transitory, namely love (13:8-10). They should understand that *even if* (13:1) they can speak in tongues, have prophetic powers, work wonders, or suffer the pains of martyrdom and thereby earn martyrdom status, these things without love count for nothing and that these are not the greatest things to which to aspire.
- 10.4.39 **Bishop, Elder, Pastor**
- 10.4.40 It was Anglican scholarship at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century (Lightfoot, Westcott, Hort and others) which reinforced long-standing Free-Church conviction that the terms bishop and elder are used interchangeably in the New Testament, with only slight regional or cultural differences, and that this as well is the meaning of pastor or under-shepherd. Recent scholarship, whether German, British or American, simply reconfirms this conclusion.
- 10.4.41 The three main traditions of Western Christendom may be epitomized by their adoption of one or other of these three terms, however, with some qualifications. The Episcopal Tradition churches claim that the role of the Bishop (*episkopos*) is prime. The Reformation Tradition churches have adopted the term Elder (*presbuteros*) to identify the collegial role of clergy (Preaching Elders) and lay leaders (Ruling Elders). Some Lutherans also have Bishops, whose role is defined in a Reformation not Episcopal sense. In English-speaking lands the denominational name Presbyterian and its correlate Presbyter accurately reflect the status and role of Elders in that Protestant tradition. Churches of the Believers Church tradition, notably Baptists, have traditionally adopted the term Pastor (*poimen*), which is understood to be biblically synonymous with Bishop and Elder.
- 10.4.42 The traditional position of the Western Episcopal churches (Roman Catholic and Anglican) and of the Eastern Orthodox Churches is that the threefold ministry of Bishops (*episcopoi*), Priests (*presbuteroi*) and Deacons (*diakono*) is the logical outgrowth of the ministry of the Apostles who were authorized by Jesus himself to shape the development of the church, and that this threefold ministry is the proper mode of the Church's government. This is the structure which the Faith and Order study *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, to which I have previously referred, takes, but not to be imposed in an authoritarian manner; rather, to comprise the basis for understanding, including allowance for some differences in interpretation, with a view to convergence of the churches toward visible unity.
- 10.4.43 This may be characterized as the route of **canonical complexity**. Traditional opposition to this view, at least from the time of Wyclif, has been the Reformation Churches' emphasis upon New Testament reform resulting in simplicity and collegiality on a non-sacramental view of the Church's mission and functions. In practice this has produced the large denominations of Protestant Churches, chiefly Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational and, to a large extent, Methodist. It may be called the route of **institutional simplicity**. But alongside these two traditions and sometimes affecting them both internally, is the tradition which may be called the route of **charismatic**

**spontaneity.** The Episcopal tradition churches have controlled charismatic spontaneity by allowing the formation of Orders or Movements, while the Reformation tradition churches have for the most part been inhospitable to charismatic movements, with resulting schism. Churches of the Believers Church tradition combine elements of the latter two but in such a manner as to preserve local church autonomy and internal order; though, like churches of the Protestant tradition, frequent schism has occurred, including the formation of whole charismatic denominations, especially as regards emergent leadership.

10.4.44 BEM proposes that *bishops* represent regional presidency or leadership (but that they be held to be sacramentally successionist only by and within the Episcopal traditions), that senior local clergy be designated *Priests, Elders, or Pastors*, and that local assistants be designated *Deacons*. The balance in ethos as to sacramental spirit, or preaching emphasis, or management focus, or charismatic spirit would be decided locally. This proposal aspires to catholicity and conciliarity; a coming together in councils in such a manner as to honor distinctive, received traditions. It is an appeal for churches of the various traditions to recognize the trunkness of the tree as full-orbed Trinitarian faith, along with respect for the leadership traditions of the churches within the terms of understanding of the threefold ministry. It is an appeal for recognition of the unity of the mystery (*myterium*) of the faith, along with respect for the traditions (*paradosis*) of the churches.

10.4.45 The emphasis in BEM upon conciliarity, mutual recognition, charisms as relating primarily to the ministry of the Gospel not clerical authority, and upon persuasion, is welcome.

10.4.46 BEM acknowledges that the terms 'priest' and 'priesthood' in the New Testament do not designate the ordained minister or ministry. Nevertheless, it pleads for recognition of the Episcopal view that early in the patristic era 'Priest' came to designate the minister who presides at the Eucharist in a manner which relates him to the priestly reality of Christ.

10.4.47 On grounds that the New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the church, BEM urges that the threefold second and third century pattern of Bishop, Priest and Deacon be established as the pattern of ordained ministry in the Church. Then, while acknowledging that originally Bishop and Elder designated local Christian community leadership, modification to designate the *episcopé* as regional, including a number of Christian communities, be adopted along with revised understanding of the responsibilities of Presbyter-Elder and Deacon. The authors of BEM say that this concept of overseeing Bishops is necessary to safeguard the unity of the body. While side-stepping the succession issue, there is thus a co-mingling of the *episcopé* with the authentic Gospel as the rule of faith. It is significant that in this discussion of the function of the bishop the term Church is used in the general, collective or universal sense, but that the local church is identified as a 'community.'

10.4.48 The description of the offices as proposed in BEM follows:

10.4.49 **Bishops** are to preach the word, preside at the sacraments and administer discipline representatively of the continuity and unity of the Church. They represent and serve the interests of the apostolic and sacramental unity of the Church, and, in communion with the Presbyters and Deacons and the whole Community, are responsible for the orderly transfer of ministerial authority in the Church.

10.4.50 **Presbyters (Priests)** serve as pastoral ministers of the Word and sacraments in a local Eucharistic Community. I draw attention again to the language used; namely,

'community' not 'local church.' It appears that the preferred way of using the term Church is in the general or collective sense, rather than applying it to the local assembly.

10.4.51           **Deacons** are to oversee and be involved in service ministries in the Church and to society at large. Their duties include Christian instruction and Scripture teaching, leading worship, administration and organizing works of charity, but there is not a specific indication that they are authorized to minister the Eucharist. (It is hoped by some that this matter would be left up to individual denominations). A recommendation is added that churches restore the Diaconate as an ordained ministry and the dignity of the office.

10.4.52           The Christian **Community** (i.e., the local church), endowed with a variety of charisms (gifts), will enrich its own life and will minister to society.

10.4.53           Christians of the Believers Church tradition (and also the Protestant Churches) will express gratitude for the emphasis in BEM on kerigmatic succession and for its conciliatory tone. Succession of the Apostolic Tradition is a marked advance over the traditional claim to Apostolic Succession. The concept advanced in BEM of a dominically structured *episcopé* will be deemed by Baptists to reflect more of the New Testament ideal than the traditional hierarchical episcopacy. Nevertheless, most Christians of the Protestant denominations, and practically all Baptists and other churches of that Free Church tradition, will have grave reservations about the BEM definition of the office of Bishop and his role, and the sacramental (Eucharistic) motif ascribed to the Church as its primary function and mode of witness to the world. This, of course, will depend upon how the word sacrament is interpreted. Perhaps ambiguity here may serve a worthy cause, as it does in regard to definition of the ordained ministry in the church regionally and locally. It appears to me that some ambiguity is deliberately written into the document to allow for flexibility to the several denominational and ideological traditions as they consider the implications of convergence for their own traditions

10.4.54           It is time to turn to an exposition of the offices of Bishop (*episcopé*), Elder (*presbuteros*), and Pastor (*poimen*) in representative texts of the early and later Church Fathers and, finally, in the New Testament.

10.4.55           **I Clement** was written about 96 C.E. from the church at Rome to the Church at Corinth in light of recurring schism at Corinth (some younger men in the church had led in the removal of the older, duly elected Presbyters). The pervasive emphasis is upon unity and order versus anarchy and fractiousness (20). The authority cited is dominical, apostolic and Scriptural (13, 40:2, 47:1, 53:1). Stress is placed upon orderly process in the appointment of church leaders (40-44).

10.4.56           Beyond the question of Clement's identity and status in the church at Rome (he was certainly not the Bishop of Rome as is claimed by the Roman Catholic Church but probably one of its leading presbyters or corresponding officers) there is the question of the stance or background or leadership structure which are reflected in this epistle among Christians at Rome. In a recent study, James S. Jeffers (*Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity*, 1991) has argued that Christianity at Rome comprised a number of house congregations spread throughout the city, which probably agreed confessionally, but had differing, even contradictory, views about themselves and society (this in itself poses the interesting question of how the church was viewed as one and many and whether the house congregations were churches or, as in the language preferred in BEM, communities?). He says that unlike house churches in other parts of the Empire, *the congregations in Rome still were not united in the early second century* (p. 187). The differences were cultural, social and economic and reflect, he says, a longer struggle than elsewhere for the emergence of the moniscopacy and that this may help account for the ultimate strength of the Roman hierarchy. Be that as it may, and even if

we allow his thesis that Clement and his group represent a more establishment and upper or middle class group than some of the other Christian communities at Rome, direct statements as well as inferences in the Epistle as to proper procedures to elect leaders and their status are instructive. All the more so if, as Jeffers claims, Clement represents the established Roman Empire administrative ideal of peace, concord and consensus, as against those who challenge the existing social order - especially the status of the established leaders - and tend to sectarianism. Even if Clement represents establishment mentality, his injunctions reflect neither monepiscopacy nor hierarchy and he makes a powerful case for congregational input.

- 10.4.57                Bishops are the leaders of the church, along with Deacons, which parallels *Philippians* 1:1. This appears to be the normal concept and practice. He argues on the basis of original apostolic practice that, whether in the country or in the city, after testing first converts by the Spirit, they were appointed *to be bishops and deacons of future believers* (42:4). A distinction is drawn between appointed ministers and the laity (40:5).
- 10.4.58                Who did the appointing (does this mean selection or ordination or both)? There is only the ambiguous statement which follows the direct, personal actions of the apostles who were living and present, namely, *by other eminent men* (42:3, tr. Kirsopp Lake) or *by others of the proper standing* (tr. Cyril Richardson). This does not mean transfer of apostolic prerogatives by succession, nor the authority of direct associates of the Apostles such as Timothy and Titus but, most likely, that through the leadership of the first presbyters other like-minded, Spirit-approved, capable leaders would emerge from within the life of the church who would be recognized for their gifts and appointed by the congregations.
- 10.4.59                Most important, however, is the phrase *with the consent of the whole church* (44:3, tr. Kirsopp Lake). There follows the qualification *have ministered to the flock of Christ without blame*, which Richardson felicitously translates *who, long enjoying everybody's approval, have ministered to Christ's flock*. The passage also identifies presbyters as the episcopate. This passage is decisive with regard to a congregational form of government having been in place; nevertheless, not as though either the presbyters exercised blank authority or that the congregation ruled by the power play of majority vote (the wrongly ejected presbyters had so been treated, apparently), but that both ministers and laity act in a Spirit-led fashion to reflect the mind of Christ.
- 10.4.60                Finally, *I Clement* is a congregational, fraternal, inter-church letter, not an episcopal letter. It is both a rebuke and a persuasive. The authority cited is dominical, apostolic and scriptural, and is centered in the kerugma and the responsibility Christians have to adequately reflect the true nature of the Gospel. The relationship assumed is fraternal (there are over sixty occurrences of 'brethren'). Clement is not the Bishop of Rome. He is probably one presbyter among others, perhaps assigned responsibility for correspondence with other churches (Hermas, *Vision* 2:4; note Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.23.11). A strong case can be made for a collegial, congregational model for the appointment of Bishops (Presbyters) and Deacons. The influence of Rome is not based on primacy among the churches, nor upon succession. It is the influence of a large, influential, kerugmatically-minded congregation. This has always been the case wherever and whenever such influential churches develop.
- 10.4.61                What about **Ignatius** the martyr, who lived about 35-107 C.E? His letters to churches, written while he was being transported to martyrdom, are the most direct and at times strident regarding the status and role of bishops and the obedience and loyalty the Christian congregations should show to them. He writes to the Ephesians (2.2) that it is fitting that they *should live in harmony with the will of the bishop*. This is in the context of his rebuke of schism and schismatics.

- 10.4.62 To the Magnesians he writes (3), *...I exhort you: Be zealous to do all things in harmony with God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God and the presbyters in the place of the Council of the Apostles, and the deacons, there be nothing in you which can divide you, but be united with the bishop and with those who preside over you as an example and lesson of immortality.* And to the Trallians he writes (7), *For when you are in subjection to the bishop as to Jesus Christ it is clear to me that you are living not after men, but after Jesus Christ...* These are but a few of the many passages in which he strongly enjoins cooperation with and obedience to the Bishop.
- 10.4.63 Such injunctions appear to make a strong case for the primacy and authority of the monepiscopacy. Ignatius was the Bishop of Antioch, or was he senior among equals? We cannot know definitely. Nevertheless, the monepiscopal tone of the five letters to the churches at Ephesus, Magnesia, Trallia, Rome, and Philadelphia as he was transported across Asia Minor is powerful.
- 10.4.64 The correlation he makes between one God and Christ, and one Bishop is direct, but does this mean one Bishop in each house church or community of Christians, or one Bishop over several house churches, or a Bishop over a metropolitan or rural area? We simply do not know. We wish we knew more of what the term 'church' meant in regard to the church in general, as against the local church, i.e., the problem of the one and the many. The extended nature of his travels and correspondence suggests a fairly general understanding of what the church is and how it should function.
- 10.4.65 The letters are invariably addressed to the Church and not to the bishop, except for the personal letter to Polycarp. He enjoins upon the congregations that service, ministry, liturgical effectiveness, and their own care and protection of one another depend upon the Bishop, the Presbyters, the Deacons and the Congregation standing together.
- 10.4.66 If his letters are primarily an indictment of schism, what are the implications for church order? H. E. W. Turner (*The Pattern of Truth*, 1956, pp. 60-61) says that the bishop served two key functions in this period: he was the guardian of the faith, and that where bishop and church worked harmoniously a focus of sacramental ministry was created. Austin Farrer (*The Apostolic Ministry*, ed. K. E. Kirk, 1946, pp.166-167) says that Ignatius' stress is upon function in relation to the *episcopé* of God, not the later redounding of glory to the human instrument. The appeal seems to be that as to leadership and administration, Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons must be honored; but, as well, that nothing which is spiritually legitimate and effective can occur without unity in Christ under the banner of the Gospel. No theory or pattern of episcopal succession emerges from these letters.
- 10.4.67 Bishops were to minister equally to the material and the spiritual sides of human need. Ignatius says to Polycarp (2.2), *Vindicate your office with all diligence, both of the flesh and spirit* (tr. Kirsopp Lake); while Cyril Richardson translates the sentence to read, *Vindicate your position by giving your whole attention to its material and spiritual sides.*
- 10.4.68 The threefold ministry of Bishop, Presbyters and Deacons (*Trallians* 7.2) is clear, but it differs from the Pastoral Epistles of Paul and from *I Clement*. This is the pattern advocated in BEM.
- 10.4.69 The letters reflect intense devotion to Christ and aspiration to martyrdom in order to share Christ's passion. Are these sentiments the product of an unbalanced mind, as some have thought? R. G. Tanner in one of the sessions of the 1975 Oxford Patristics Conference which I attended argued that Ignatius does not express morbid desire for death, such as Stoic suicide, but willingness as a soldier to die for a cause.

- 10.4.70 I have a theory as to why, in part, the moniscopacy emerged in this period and it has to do with Christians coping with false teachers, dissemblers, schismatics and, especially, persecution *in the circumstances of their conventicles*. Rarely are the circumstances and psychology of persecuted conventicles addressed by modern scholars. In observations I have made of building-less congregations (for example, congregations that rent store-front space, or rotate from house to house) it is noteworthy that these inevitably are intensely person-centered, especially in a charismatic leader (by charismatic I mean a dynamic personality). Building-less Christians are very much personality-cult oriented. Where congregations own or have available settled places for worship and activities personal loyalty to the leader is often less intense and sometimes is a matter of indifference to devotees of the faith. All kinds of rationalizations can be made to justify such a person-centered pattern of leadership and adherence, including quite legitimate ones such as that leaders serve as guardians, even canons, of the ideology and traditions of the group, and traditions of office-succession. Circumstances such as those of the early Christians could well have evoked Ignatius' impassioned plea for loyalty to the bishop.
- 10.4.71 One of the most commonly cited sources in regard to claims for the moniscopacy, apostolic succession and the primacy of Rome historically, is a passage from **Irenaeus** (c.130 - c.209 C.E.). I will focus on the key passage in the *Against Heresies*, Book 3. In responding to the teachings of the Gnostic Valentinus, Basilides and others, he grounds the truth of the Christian faith in the Scriptures and *that tradition which originates from the apostles, which is preserved by means of the successions of presbyters in the churches* (3.2.1-2, the translation of Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 1867). This tradition comprises not private mysteries such as Gnostics claim, but the publicly attested to and historically traceable data of dominical and apostolic history which can be reckoned up and which have nothing to do with the opinions advanced by the Gnostics (3.3.1-2). We can readily do this, he adds, by citing the ancient and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by Peter and Paul, *the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every church should agree with this church, on account of its preeminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those (faithful men) who exist everywhere*.
- 10.4.72 This appears to support in a straightforward manner the claim not only to calculable apostolic succession but also the claim to the primacy of Rome. What can be said in reply?
- 10.4.73 First, it is not a succession of the moniscopacy but of many presbyters. Second, Irenaeus utilizes the term 'church' in both a local and a collective sense, but chiefly in this context in the plural, 'churches.' He has recourse to the conserved tradition *by the most ancient churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse* (3.4.1). This transmission is not merely by virtue of office but, in the absence of paper and ink (the collections of New Testament books were only beginning), *by salvation written in their hearts by the Spirit*.
- 10.4.74 Irenaeus is saying that while the succession of the true apostolic tradition could be stated for every church (he is disputing the legitimacy of the non-apostolic teaching of the Gnostics), to do that would be tedious, so he chooses Rome as one among many because it is a notable church and is situated in the Capital of the Empire. Rome in Irenaeus' argument is a paradigm of something that could be cited in many other places. This and other key churches mirror that which is the case everywhere among Christians. False Presbyters must be shunned (4.26.3). True Presbyters conserve the genuine dominical and apostolic kerugma (3.2.2; 4.26.2, 4; 4.33.8). They reflect sound doctrine and blameless conduct, which mirrors the language of *1 Timothy* 3:1-7. There is indeed an order of Presbyters. Bishops are identically described within common contexts (3.3.1-3, 4.26.2). But the true succession is that of the authentic apostolic faith.

- 10.4.75                    **Tertullian** (c.160 - 220 CE), bishop of Carthage in North Africa, gives us some of the most biting satire in the Early Fathers against claims to successionist authority, notably by the Bishop of Rome. In *On Modesty* 21 he apparently attacks Callistus (Bishop of Rome, 218 - 222 C.E.), satirically calls him Sir Psychic, and contrasts what Callistus is doing as *your church* with the Apostle Peter (Callistus' lax discipline included issuing edicts offering penitential remission for the sins of adultery and fornication). Tertullian draws a distinction between claims to authority based on succession and spiritual authority as the moral mordancy and power of a spiritual church.
- 10.4.76                    Surprisingly, while he has much to say about the personal and moral qualifications of Bishops which reflects themes from *1 Timothy* 3:1-7, I have not found detailed exposition by him of the passage nor of the office. In an obvious allusion to *1 Timothy* 3:1 he says that one can indeed desire a good work, such as the office of Bishop (*On The Soul* 16). He insists on monogamy and the once-married provision of *1 Timothy* 3:2. Bishops have the duty to discipline and the duty of *presiding not imperially but ministerially*; they may not exercise power *that exhibits neither prophetic nor the apostolic character* (*On Modesty* 21).
- 10.4.77                    As a final example illustrating the development of the concept of Bishop and Presbyter, I cite the comments of **John Chrysostom** (c. 344 - 407 C.E.). Born and reared in Antioch, he was the eloquent and powerful Patriarch of Constantinople and an influential evangelistic preacher, expositor and church leader.
- 10.4.78                    His comments on *Philippians* 1:1 are fascinating because they reflect knowledge of the changes that had occurred in the patristic period as to church office and the significance of the titles of office along with reluctance to contravene traditions which had developed since apostolic times
- 10.4.79                    He asks (*Homily 1*), What does Paul mean when he addresses Fellow-Bishops and Deacons? How could there be several Bishops in one city? His answer is that in the Apostolic era titles were interchangeable. A Bishop could be called a Deacon (in the sense of being Christ's servant). That Timothy was obviously a Bishop, says Chrysostom, is evident from Paul's injunction that he not lay hands (ordain) hastily on anyone. Only a Bishop can ordain and Presbyters would not have laid hands on a Bishop. Thus, when Paul interchanges the words Elder (*presbuteros*) and Bishop (*episcopos*) he is speaking in the general sense of servanthood, not in regard to the specific status and authority of each office,
- 10.4.80                    *So then, as I said, both the Presbyters were of old called Bishops and Deacons of Christ, and the Bishops Presbyters; and hence even now many Bishops write, 'To my fellow' Presbyter,' and 'To my fellow Deacon.'* But otherwise the specific name is distinctly appropriated to each, the Bishop and the Presbyter.
- 10.4.81                    Chrysostom is saying that early Apostolic tradition has been consolidated and regularized into three orders: Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons. This is the substance of the appeal of BEM in our time: acceptance of this ancient pattern today as the foundation for confessional conservation and eccesiological convergence.
- 10.4.82                    What is to be said about the nature and function of these offices in their New Testament contexts and for today in light of our received practices? I turn to a discussion of **bishop** and **elder**, and the correlative term **pastor**, reserving for later comment the term **deacon**.
- 10.4.83                    What is specific to the term **bishop** (*episcopos*) and to the functions of the office in the New Testament? I conclude that the terms Bishop and Elder as used in the New Testament are synonyms.

- 10.4.84 L. Coenen (*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther and H. Bietenhard, eds, 1967-71; Colin Brown, ed.-ET, 3 volumes, 1975; hereafter designated DNTTh, 1.188-192) and H. Beyer (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Kittell and Friedrich, eds, 1928-1973; ET: G. W. Bromiley, 9 volumes, 1964, hereafter designated ThDNT 1.599-622) are terms which essentially define the same office. In classical usage it suggests a city under divine watch-care. In the Old Testament and Septuagint, it identifies someone who is appointed to a roster or duty as an overseer, officer, governor or leader. There is no discernible trace of any connection between Old Testament usage and the New Testament so far as office is concerned. That a Qumranian community monarchical overseer is a precursor of the New Testament office is, to my mind, conjecture.
- 10.4.85 In *Hebrews* 12:15 *see to it* (the verb *episkopeo*) suggests communal duty. In *1 Peter* 5:2 'exercising the oversight' is likely parallel to eldership in verse 1, but is disputed. Note that the RSV renders it in terms of function, *tend the flock of God that is your charge*; while the NEB relates the function to a specific office, *tend the flock of God whose shepherds you are* (note Bruce Metzger, ed., *A textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 1971, 965-696). The RSV excludes *oversight*, the evident parallel to elder and fellow-elder in verse 1. The NEB includes it, giving full referential weight to *episkopountes* as the parallel to elder. Metzger and his editorial colleagues include it, but with qualification, and they ask whether inclusion registers an early exegetical expansion, whether exclusion signifies stylistic considerations, or whether exclusion signifies ecclesiastical conviction that Peter could not admonish presbyters to exercise the function of bishops.
- 10.4.86 The action of *episcopé* has more to do with attitude, a caring spirit, than with office, though the latter is certainly clear (Beyer, ThDNT 2.603-4). It includes pastoral visitation (*James* 1:27) and care of converts (*see how they are*, or, as we say today, *check them out*, *Acts* 15:36).
- 10.4.87 The term *episcopé* (*1 Timothy* 3:1) refers to an office to which one may aspire. It does not describe a monarchical episcopacy, which appears to be a second and third century development and is characterized by a shift from missionary mood to institutional structure (example: the difference between the authoritarian and office-holder mood at Rome which Tertullian criticizes, and the missionary mood of an Irenaeus in Gaul). The passage shifts attention from duties to personal qualities. Plurality of Bishops in a single, local church is clear (*Acts* 20:28; *Philippians* 1:1).
- 10.4.88 The stress in *1 Timothy* 3:1-7 is placed by Paul on graces more than on gifts. His premise is that the Bishop should have certain theological and administrative qualifications but that, nevertheless, his office and ministry should not be undermined by character flaws. Exegesis and exposition of the passage yields five key areas of virtues and abilities:
- 10.4.89 First: **Spiritual maturity**. He is to be above reproach (v.2), which means unensurable or not liable to criticism, especially as regards the qualities which follow in the passage. He must be temperate, which means sobriety; sensible, i.e. self-control; and hospitable, which means outgoing and welcoming.
- 10.4.90 Second: **Emotional stability**. Paul says, *the husband of one wife* (v.2). Literally the passage reads a 'one-woman man.' This does not mean that he must be married, nor that he is no polygamist (assumed), nor that he must not practice serial marriage (one at a time), nor that he is simply a faithful husband. It means that he is not divorced and remarried or a re-married widower. It is a hard sentence, and is one of the passages upon which Tertullian focuses.

- 10.4.91                   Third: **Theological astuteness.** A bishop must be apt to teach, i.e., have a mental capacity to teach effectively.
- 10.4.92                   Fourth: **Proven character.** In verse 3 Paul lists five qualities: no drunkard - not wine-flustered; not violent - no brawler, not splenetic. not volatile; gentle - gracious, forbearing, considerate; not quarrelsome - inoffensive, unsnappish; no lover of money - not a money-grubber. In verse 6 he insists that candidates not be novices (a nestling, or young, uninstructed or untested Christian), and not a swaggerer. Paul adds in verse 7 that a bishop must be well regarded, i.e., have a good reputation, not only inside but also outside the church.
- 10.4.93                   Fifth: **Effective manager.** Paul says that a Bishop must manage his own house and children well, which does not mean autocracy but presidency of the home and management of family life by the power of suasion.
- 10.4.94                   It is thought by many that use of the term **Elder** (*presbuteros*) in the New Testament has a distinctly Jewish flavor, and has reference to honor that age and wisdom bring through the maturity of rich experience which yields wise judgment. Classical use suggests that those regarded as elders were older (but not enfeebled by age or infirmity), probably beyond age fifty, who were given guardianship roles and responsibilities in the community (Coenen, DNTTh 1.192-201; G. Bornkamm, ThDNT 6.651-683).
- 10.4.95                   Old Testament use suggests eldership to be a feature of the tribal system and the patriarchal clan, as the elders of the nation (*Exodus* 12:21-22) and the ruling nobility of the individual tribes (2 *Samuel* 19:11; note *Ruth* 4:2). During the Exile they were the guardians and representatives of the Jewish community and culture. In the period before and during the time of Christ they comprised a Council of Elders, the Sanhedrin. After the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and the attempts to reconstitute Jewish religious and cultural life in Palestine at Jamnia in the last decade of the century, the title Elder identified outstanding Jewish religious teachers and leaders. In the Qumran documents the title is used, but apparently not of a specific office.
- 10.4.96                   In the New Testament the term Elder is used of a representative (*Luke* 14:32) and of old men (*Titus* 2:2). In 1 Timothy 4:14 ordaining Elders are spoken of (see my note, later, on ordination). Is this ordination? And do they constitute a presbyteriate, as Jeremias insists; or a body which confers ordination, as Dibelius thought? Or, is the idea of an ordaining body a reading back of later practice?
- 10.4.97                   Coenen, previously cited, reflects the pre-institutional charisma hypothesis of Adolf Harnack that whoever is filled with zeal proves himself thereby and that as yet there *were no institutionalized or precisely differentiated offices in the church known to Paul*. It is probable, he adds, that there would be several *episcopoi* just as there would be a number of *diakonoi*, that the definition of the episcopal office remains unclear and that the relation of the episcopal office to the presbyters is not clear. But, as I have already argued and is evident from passages such as *1 Timothy* 5:17, the offices and functions are more clearly defined that Coenen allows.
- 10.4.98                   Elders appear in the Acts narrative suddenly and without explanation. They are leaders in the Christian church at Jerusalem alongside the Apostles and elsewhere as missionary activity establishes new congregations beyond Jerusalem. Do the Elders of *Acts* 11:30 comprise a Judean Christian 'Sanhedrin?' Their presence along with the Apostles has already been noted (see 10.4.3). Is this a synagogal model, as G. Bornkamm thinks (ThDNT 6.663)? The early days of the Church described in Acts certainly carry with them a Jewish flavor, but the concept seems to be culturally more neutral in its missionary implementation.

- 10.4.99                   Eduard Schweizer (*Church Order in the New Testament*, ET 1961, p. 71) and others suggest that the missionary pattern was presbyterian or conciliar in nature. The Elders comprised the directorate of the local church which has a certain continuity with Jewish order. In *1 Timothy* 5:17 and 19 Elder is a title of honor for a body of leaders who care for the church. In *Titus* 1:5-9 their role includes collegiality, leadership, teaching, and defense of sound doctrine.
- 10.4.100                   It is evident from *Titus* 1:5, 7 that the terms Elder and Bishop are interchangeable and that the qualifications listed by Paul in this passage parallel those for Bishops in *1 Timothy* 3:1-7. The details as to how they functioned in leading the churches are not available to us, but it can be said with a strong degree of certainty that it was not formally hierarchical and authoritarian. Most recent scholarship agrees. Leaders emerged as knowledgeable, spirit-filled persons who were recognized for their gifts by the Congregations and, having been nurtured in faith and stature by a heritage of leaders, were assigned by the Congregations deferentially to leadership roles.
- 10.4.101                   Shepherd (*poimen*) is the metaphor for **Pastor**, the under-shepherd of the flock. In Plato rulers of city-states were compared to shepherds (E. Beyreuther, DNTTh 3.564-469).
- 10.4.102                   In the Old Testament and the Septuagint God is the true shepherd of his people, and they are his flock (*Psalms* 23; *Jeremiah* 3:15).
- 10.4.103                   In the New Testament Jesus speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd (*Matthew* 9:36; *John* 10:1-18). As Christ is the Chief Shepherd, those who serve in the church as Bishops and Presbyters are Undershepherds, which is the major point of *1 Peter* 5:1-5 where Shepherd, Bishop and Elder are identified (note the shepherd function described by Jesus to Peter in *John* 21:16). There is strong agreement on this point by most scholars (note Eduard Schweizer (*Church Order in the New Testament*, 1961, pp. 85, 198-203, 211-219; Leon Morris, *Ministers of God*, 1964, p. 73). As in the case of Bishop and the ministry of oversight, the term Pastor at first probably referred to an activity by church leaders more than it defined an office or person.
- 10.4.104                   What conclusions can we draw from this study of Bishop, Elder and Pastor?
- 10.4.105                   In his commentary on *Philippians* 1:1, H. C. G. Moule says that the local church was large enough to need a *staff* of Christian ministers, i.e., Bishops and Deacons, or 'overseers and working helpers,' (*Philippians Studies*, 1904, p. 14-16). The moniscopacy is not in play at this stage of Apostolic Church life (later that develops as the Apostles pass away and leaders assume their role on grounds of succession, one per region; but, as we have seen from early authors such as Irenaeus, is it succession of persons or of the authentic tradition of the Gospel, or is the form of the question disingenuous?).
- 10.4.106                   The Roman Catholic scholar R. Schnackenburg (*The Church in the New Testament*, ET 1965) regards an hierarchical structure as essential to the church's nature and mission; nevertheless, he qualifies this in relation to the Lordship of Christ, the Spirit-filled life of the church and the Gospel mission of the church. He deals with the form of post-apostolic leadership only briefly and approvingly cites the opinion of H. von Campenhausen that in the New Testament there is neither a directing order of Presbyters nor the later monarchical office of Bishop.
- 10.4.107                   Raymond Brown, also a Roman Catholic scholar, discusses leadership in relation to the joint term Presbyter-Bishop in *Titus* 1:5-7 (*The Churches the Apostles Left Behind*, 1984, p. 32-46) and adopts the view evidently implicit in the actions of the first Christians to assign to Presbyters the distinctive pastoral oversight functions of the *episcopé* which are found in New Testament teaching. He suggests that the combined

functions of Presbyter-Bishop would have been natural to and have been *appreciated in a tight organization with a familial tone*, requiring later separation of roles in larger congregations. Stability and continuity are the hallmarks of the New Testament institutional terms which always carry the attendant risk of official control rather than spiritual stature, pastoral care and missionary concern.

10.4.108

Austin Farrer, the Oxford Anglo-Catholic scholar, is hard pressed to defend the monepiscopacy in light of *Philippians 1:1* (*The Apostolic Ministry*, ed. K. E. Kirk, 1946, p. 159-160) but he makes a valiant attempt, which is interesting in light of his family heritage (his father was a Baptist New Testament professor at Spurgeon's College). He argues that since in the Pastoral Epistles bishops are mentioned singly, nothing in *1 Timothy* corrects the impression that monepiscopacy is the system described, and that if the pastorals are an Asian production then it would be difficult to separate the monepiscopacy so ardently championed by Ignatius from them. He makes the astounding suggestion that perhaps Titus wrongly believed on the strength of Acts 20:17 and 28 that the two offices were once equated and that if so his testimony may be doubted. This is ingenious but unconvincing.

10.4.109

One can agree with H. Beyer (ThDNT 2.617-619) that one derives little help from pagan sources as to the meaning of these terms. There is the possibility of some parallel between synagogue leadership and Christian worship, but whatever Jewish flavor this imposed on the concept was fleeting. For Jewish Christians Elder was probably the familiar term. For Greek Christians Bishop and Deacon were obvious terms, but these terms do not raise Christian leadership to great heights of authority. There are sufficient warnings against pride and sufficient attention drawn to the example of the self-humbling of Jesus the Chief Shepherd of the flock in the New Testament period to guard against that.

10.4.110

The authors of the BEM document have appealed to the threefold form of ordained ministry of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons as a formula for conciliation and convergence. In doing so they stress apostolicity rather than catholicity as a strategy to avoid engaging the thorny issue of apostolic succession. They argue that true succession is of the Gospel rather than of office and that authority should be deemed to be collegial rather than monarchical. Nevertheless, most Protestants and Christians of the Believers Church tradition have a sense of unease that an historically and conceptually unacceptable definition of the office of Bishop and apostolic succession lurks behind the scenes and that the strategy of built-in ambiguity runs a considerable risk for them in relation to core theological conventions they share about the teaching and practices of the New Testament, which they continue to feel must be in one way or another normative, however frail and uncertain part of our understanding is. .

10.4.111

Is there a convincing reason to do other than accept the well-documented conclusion of late nineteenth century scholarship, including episcopal scholarship such as that of J. B. Lightfoot, that the terms and offices of Bishop and Elder and, consequently, that of Pastor or Undershepherd, are identical in the New Testament? Variations of use depending upon cultural distinctiveness are possible, but parallels are more likely. Plurality of holders of office in any one church was neither here nor there, nor need it be now. Nor are Bishops to be viewed primarily as 'overseers of religious business' in the sense chiefly of religious administration. Differentiation of status between Bishop and Elder and the emergence of the monepiscopacy as the standard form in the district and in the local church are later developments. Very much depends upon one's definition of Church, local and general. I conclude there is no reason on grounds of New Testament practice to think other than that a Pastor is the, or a, Presbyter or Bishop in the Church, understood in the primary sense as the Local Church .

10.4.112

What of the office of **Deacon**?

- 10.4.113 The verb *diakoneo* and the noun *diakonos* are common in ancient Greek, both Classical and Koiné. They simply signify service or one who serves. This is true in Old Testament Septuagint usage as well. In Christian usage the terms identify both general service and the specific office of Deacon.
- 10.4.114 We assume that the seven who were appointed to serve (at tables, i.e., social service) in *Acts* 6:2 were the first Deacons because the verb *diakoneo* is used; nevertheless, they are not specifically called Deacons. If this passage does not record the creation of the office, then Deacons appear full-blown on the pages of the New Testament just as Elders do in the early days of the church in *Acts*.
- 10.4.115 General use in the New Testament is frequent. It includes loving service (*1 Corinthians* 16:15; *Acts* 11:29; *Ephesians* 4:12) inspired by the Spirit (*2 Corinthians* 3:8). A secular ruler is God's servant against wrongdoing (*Romans* 13:4). It embraces the concept of service in the widest sense (*Matthew* 20:26), such as a waiter at a meal (*John* 2:5, 9). Luke employs it as a general term for Paul's ministry in all its aspects (*Acts* 20:24; 21:19).
- 10.4.116 The office of Deacon is identified in *Philippians* 1:1 and *1 Timothy* 3:8-13. Most commentators assume that Paul is referring to male office-holders, but it is not at all certain that the women referred to in *1 Timothy* 3:11 are the wives of deacons. They may very well have been deaconesses (the noun *diakonos* had a common gender). The verb is used of women (*Romans* 16:1) as it is of men and if it is assumed that the seven of *Romans* 6 are deacons then an identical case can be made that the term identifies a woman deacon in *Romans* 16:1. The RSV so renders it.
- 10.4.117 What are the qualifications for the office and functions of the office? *1 Timothy* 3:8-13 is the key passage. The parallels between these qualifications and those enumerated for the office of bishop are remarkable (note 10.4.97-101):
- 10.4.118 First, **Spiritual maturity**. In verse 8 Paul says that they must be serious, i.e., high-minded, dignified, but not austere; not double-tongued, i.e., integrity of speech, no tale-bearing; not addicted, i.e., controlled appetites, not lax; not greedy, i.e., not avaricious, trustworthy in regard to that which is not their own.
- 10.4.119 Second, **Theological astuteness**. He or she must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience (v.9). This means a person of genuine faith who has keen spiritual discernment, i.e., who is well-instructed in the faith. In verse 13 Paul speaks of boldness, which means confidence to exhort spiritually. In what? He adds *in the faith*, which means one in whom faith and understanding combine so that the faith can be transmitted to others. Clearly these standards entail doctrinal competence as well as personal commitment.
- 10.4.120 Third, **Proven character**. In verse 10 Paul says that deacons must first be tested, i.e., approved after scrutiny (this, I believe, implies congregational scrutiny and approval). They are to be blameless, i.e., irreproachable.
- 10.4.121 Fourth, **Emotional stability**. As in the case of bishops, Paul again insists that a deacon be a 'one woman man,' i.e., once married (if married), verse 12. In verse 13 he adds that a deacon must have a good standing which, as one alternative, suggests esteemed godliness.
- 10.4.122 Fifth, **Effective manager**. In verse 12 Paul, as in the case of Bishops, says that a Deacon must be able to manage his children and household well (one of the grounds for insisting that deacons are only males). Also, as another alternative, the phrase *good standing* in verse 13 may suggest an honorable standing as a leader and manager of business and human affairs.

- 10.4.123                    It may be a purely literary accident and of no conceptual significance, but it is interesting that in the case of Bishops Paul's second major emphasis is Emotional Stability, while for deacons it is Theological Astuteness.
- 10.4.124                    In most Christian traditions the office of Deacon has suffered some denigration. In Protestant and Believers Church circles the former stature of deacons has been cut back conceptually and, in some cases, Baptist and other Believers Churches have installed Boards of Elders on grounds that Deacons were intended basically to be 'waiters at tables,' i.e., to perform service ministries but that Elders are needed to serve the function of pastoral oversight, discipleship training and indoctrination. This is misguided as to its biblical foundations and is unwarranted historically. As well, it concedes the recent Episcopal claim, including the proposal in the BEM document, that a threefold ministry structure is desirable, namely Bishops, Elders and Deacons. From the standpoint of the Believers Church (and also Protestant) traditions, it is an error to regard Bishops (Pastors) and Elders as two separate classes, and a serious error to regard Deacons as being simply 'waiters at tables.' It is a mistake to divide their spiritual role from their practical duties.
- 10.4.125                    The preceding exegesis of *1 Timothy* 3:8-13 regarding the office of deacon makes clear that they are to have a theological role in the life of the church.
- 10.4.126                    Raymond Brown says that *virtually nothing is known of what deacons did in New Testament times and how they differed from presbyters* (*The Churches the Apostles Left Behind*, 1984, p. 32). How they differed from Presbyters does not appear to include any lack in spiritual discernment and theological competence. That virtually nothing is known of what deacons did may be challenged on grounds of the detailed qualifications for their ministry which Paul lists. Stephen the Deacon was a preacher (*Acts* 6:8-10). Moral, spiritual and theological qualifications are correlates of skills for practical Christian ministry *in a leadership role*. Most studies now concede that in the New Testament the office of Deacon is closely linked to that of Bishop (K. Hess, *DNTTh* 3.548), but whether one can go forward from that point to downgrade the function of Deacons to the material care of the church should be challenged.
- 10.4.127                    A recent study unseats the 'material care' thesis which has become part of recent assumptions about the office within all of the traditions of modern Christendom, and supports my thesis that the office, along with the role of Pastors-Bishops-Elders, includes significant spiritual and theological leadership components (John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources*, 1990). Why are the Christian traditions so prone to bureaucratizing roles and creating hierarchies which quickly have built into them claims of special religious authority?
- 10.4.128                    Collins argues that while about a quarter of the uses of *diakonia* carry the meaning of humble and benevolent service, this is not foundational to a proper understanding of the term and its uses in ancient times. Diaconal activity focused on the concept of 'courier,' i.e., carrying a message or object, or carrying out an action on behalf of another. While the status is subordinate to the sending authority, the status may be very high. Collins shows that such usage continued from the classical into the patristic era. In classical usage the association with divine messages is very strong (Hermes as messenger is called *diakonos*).
- 10.4.129                    Can churches of the Believers Church tradition, notably Baptists, withstand the contemporary pull to authoritarianism? Recently, some Baptist and other chiefly independent churches of the Believers Church tradition in Britain, Canada and the United States have injected Boards of Elders between the Pastors and the Deacons. This is tending to undermine the importance of congregational decision making and the principle of universal ministry. (It should be noted that in *Ephesians* 4:12 there should not be a

comma after 'saints;' the passage should read that the apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers are *to equip the saints for the work of ministry*. Their job is not to be primarily the ministers, but to train the laity to minister. The new authoritarianism claims authority over the Church and over Deacons and results in a new form of authoritarian tribalism patterned after the Elders of Israel, not the concept of the local body of which Christ is the head and in which Pastors and Deacons are fellow-workers with the congregation.

10.4.130

In Britain this trend is taking two forms, at opposite ends of the religious spectrum: Boards of Elders are being created in Calvinistically-minded Baptist churches and a similar injection is occurring in charismatic Baptist churches. Among the latter, leadership have adopted an hierarchical chain structure: this leader 'is in subjection to' so-and-so, and he in turn 'is in subjection to' someone else, and so on. All of this is claimed to be under the aegis of the Holy Spirit. It is ironic that at a time when monepiscopal churches are striving to implement collegial leadership and at least are discussing universal ministry, others of the Believers Church heritage are making strident claims to personal authority. This trend is also apparent in Western Canada and in the United States, especially among the new community churches which in regard to polity are fundamentally part of the Believers Church tradition.

10.4.131

This trend flies in the face of the fact that biblical scholarship reinforces the conclusion that Pastor, Bishop, and Elder are synonymous terms and that Deacons, far from being merely waiters at tables, play a crucial spiritual and theological role in the New Testament. This move tends to reinforce the claims to authority of a new professional class and to weaken lay participation. The pattern which Paul identifies in his address to the Christian assembly at Philippi has been effective in the past as a format for missionary thrust and to nurture Christians: *To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons (Philippians 1:1)*.

10.4.132

Later, when I turn attention to key functions of the Church as the body of Christ, I will discuss the ministries which are included in the concept of the universal priesthood of Christians. This relates as much to one's understanding of the nature of the church as it does to mission.

10.5.0

## **Christian Baptism**

10.5.1

### **Baptism Yesterday and Today**

During the past half-century there has been a remarkable resurgence of interest in the meaning and practice of Christian Baptism, the impetus for which came more from those who practice infant baptism than from those who insist upon believers baptism. The catalyst for this movement is held by many to have been Karl Barth's 1943 lecture *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism* which Ernst Payne translated into English in 1948. In the midst of the tensions created for the State Churches of central Europe by World War II, especially in Germany under Hitler, as well as on biblical grounds, Barth recommended discontinuance of the practice of infant baptism because it was playing culturally into the hands of despotic forces.

10.5.2

The rise of interest was due, on the one hand, to growing unease among those who practice pedobaptism that the baptism of infants had become more a cultural rite than a spiritual one and, as well, unease about the theological and historical footing of the pedobaptist claim. A significant body of literature emerged, chiefly at first from pedobaptists. Only later did Baptists and others of the Believers Church tradition contribute to the dialogue. The views expressed in BEM on Baptism are largely a distillation of the dialogue on Baptism since World War II.

10.5.3

It is not an easy subject to get one's mind around. Churches of the Episcopal and Reformation traditions both practice infant baptism but with important differences of

understanding, apart from their joint differences with Believer's Church insistence that the personal faith of the candidate for baptism be regarded as an essential component of baptism.

- 10.5.4 Key questions concern first **who** should be baptized and **what** does the rite signify and only then the question as to **how** (the mode) one should be baptized. This is of immense significance because all traditions concede that immersion was indeed the mode of baptism in the apostolic era and even today some traditions such as certain of the Eastern Orthodox Churches continue to practice the immersion of infants. A friend of mine, a Church of England priest, remarked as he led me through the ancient church of which he was Rector that, technically, by canon law a baptismal font is supposed to be large enough to immerse the infant, as many of them in the older churches are.
- 10.5.5 In the Episcopal traditions of the West (chiefly Roman Catholic and Anglican) the child is baptized, but Confirmation is usually delayed until about age twelve. However, while a Priest may baptize, only the Bishop can confirm because inherent in the apostolic succession theology is the claim that the Holy Spirit is transmitted episcopally and that this occurs at Confirmation. Some Anglo-Catholics have held that the Holy Spirit is the agent in baptism but that in Confirmation he is the gift. One may add that in the Western Episcopal traditions some hold to the baptismal regeneration of the infant but others, especially those of the Low Church tradition (Anglican evangelicals), do not.
- 10.5.6 In the Eastern Orthodox traditions baptismal theology and practice are quite different from Episcopal tradition practice in the West. Confirmation at a later time does not exist. At baptism the infant or convert is sealed with the Oil of Chrism, a sign of receiving the Spirit, and is made fully a member of the church. This at least honors biblical kerugmatic practice in conjoining Baptism, union with Christ, being armed with the Spirit, and membership, though one might disagree with its application to infants.
- 10.5.7 I believe that the traditional practice in the West of separating Baptism and Confirmation, which has no biblical warrant, has influenced charismatic practice of regarding the baptism of the Spirit as a post-conversion and post-baptism event, and to carelessness in some evangelical and fundamentalist circles about baptism itself. Theologically and in practice, detaching conversion-baptism, reception of the Spirit and membership in the local body from one another has been disingenuous. It is fascinating to observe that some evangelicals and fundamentalists allow for Church membership without baptism, which the traditional Christian denominations do not allow. Who is honoring biblical teaching?
- 10.5.8 Interpretation of Confirmation has always been difficult in all the pedobaptism traditions. Calvin called it one of the five 'bastard Sacraments' of the Roman Catholic Church, but retained it as an ancient custom suitable for examining candidates in the Catechism. In recent years in at least one major Protestant denomination, the United Church of Canada (Canada's largest Protestant Church, a union of Presbyterians, Methodist and Congregationalists) a strong move was made to dispense with Confirmation and to affirm baptism as a single rite of incorporation into Christ and entry into membership in the church (*Remit on Christian Initiation*, Action of the General Council of the United Church of Canada, 1983). This reflects the debate on the meaning of baptism especially as regards the kerugmatic wholeness of the rite.
- 10.5.9 The Protestant Churches (chiefly Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Methodist), as heirs of medieval church practice, retained infant baptism and later Confirmation, though they rejected baptismal regeneration (with the exception of some Lutherans).

- 10.5.10 In regard to infants, baptism theology is convoluted, as George Beasley-Murray has shown in his *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, 1966. In the Reformation tradition, which is rooted in Scripture, justification for infant baptism is usually sought in the Old Testament, in particular by linking the covenant relationship of God's people *as a people* with God and the Christian community's covenant relationship with God through Christ. Elements of the argument include: that Gentiles were made part of the covenant community, that Reformed theology teaches neither baptismal regeneration nor decisional regeneration, that grace embraces the individual beyond personal faith, and that infant baptism like circumcision in the Old Testament is the mark of the Covenant. The rock-bottom claim is that children belong with their parents to the covenant community (for some, based on *1 Corinthians 7:14*;) and that at least once Jesus healed a child on the basis of the faith of the parent (*John 4:50*).
- 10.5.11 The best justification of infant baptism that I have read is by a Baptist (George Beasley-Murray, *New Dictionary of Theology*, eds: S. B. Ferguson, David F. Wright and J. I. Packer, 1988, p. 71), though he advocates faith-baptism. If it is the case, as Beasley-Murray believes the New Testament data show, that Baptism is an embodiment of the Gospel and is properly faith-baptism as in *1 Peter 3:12*, what can be said for infant baptism? He writes,
- 10.5.12 *Most Christians, however, have been baptized in infancy; how does their baptism relate to the apostolic exposition of baptism? The traditional belief that it applies without modification is questioned by many sacramental theologians. A theology of infant baptism will emphasize the initiatory function of the rite within the community of the Spirit, having respect both to the accomplished redemption of Christ and the goal of appropriation of that redemption by faith and consecration to the service of Christ. Whatever the age of the baptized, baptism signifies grace and call for lifelong growth in Christ with a view to the resurrection at the last day.*
- 10.5.13 Oscar Cullmann (*Baptism in the New Testament*, ET 1958) and Joachim Jeremias (*Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, 1960, ET 1968) wrote vigorous rejoinders to Karl Barth's proposal to discontinue infant baptism. They sought to renew biblical and historical justification for the practice. Review of the arguments makes evident that continuation of the practice has more to do with the values of tradition than either biblical or historical justification. The theology of infant baptism and rejection of it since medieval times is historically rooted in the European social and political structure. Believers Church Christians reject infant baptism not only because they find no warrant for it biblically, but also because it had become the initiatory rite of a sacral society where Church and State are coextensive, the two sides of nation state, like heads and tails of a coin. Beasley-Murray has written one of the most complete analyses of the New Testament and historical data (*Baptism in the New Testament*, 1963) but I add the conclusion of Kurt Aland of Münster University (*Did the Christian Church Baptize Infants?*, ET 1963), himself of the pedobaptism tradition, in his dialogue with Jeremias.
- 10.5.14 Aland declares that one cannot justify infant baptism on grounds of either Scripture or Early Church practice but that nevertheless it should be retained. This is also the conclusion of BEM. Aland says that the missionary situation of Apostolic times is unrepeatable (which is in part also Beasley-Murray's concession to the widespread practice of infant baptism), and that the concept of prevenient and sovereign grace within Christian community life is more important than methodology.
- 10.5.15 Whether a theology of grace can justify the practice is of course an important question, but Christians of the Believers Church tradition seriously question that the missionary situation of the Apostolic era is unrepeatable. The conviction on their part that conversion and faith-baptism is the primary task of the church before much else can happen marks a difference in liturgical ethos between the Reformation and the Believers Church traditions (to say nothing about differences between the Episcopal tradition and

the other two). In Believers Churches, conversion is preached insistently to the families of Christians. There is the constant pressure for public, personal commitment, not the assumption of an inclusive covenant. The issue of decision *versus* nurture is a difficult one for both traditions, but in different ways. There remains the question, of course, as to what extent and in what ways the church should be restorationist. That question bears upon traditional practices in all the traditions.

- 10.5.16                   The BEM document says that while the possibility of infant baptism also being practiced in the Apostolic age cannot be excluded, *baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament* (Section 11). They emphasize that the church is the community of faith, and that on either mode nurture in faith is the responsibility of the church. Infant baptism is justified on grounds of corporate faith and the faith which the child shares with its parents (Commentary on Section 12), a form of understanding which may be deemed to be parallel with believers baptism and the explicit faith of the convert, but both are said to be responses to grace. They regard recovery of baptismal unity as the heart of the ecumenical task (Commentary on Section 6) which, they believe, can happen through mutual recognition of differing traditions.
- 10.5.17                   BEM offers the following as the New Testament meaning of Christian Baptism (Section 2):
- 10.5.18                   1. Participation in Christ's death and resurrection (*Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12*).
- 10.5.19                   2. Conversion, pardon and cleansing (*1 Corinthians 6:11*).
- 10.5.20                   3. The gift of the Spirit (*Acts 2:38*) and renewal by the Spirit (*Titus 3:5*) which includes a new birth (*John 3:5*).
- 10.5.21                   4. Incorporation into Christ, which includes enlightenment by Christ (*Ephesians 5:14*) and re-clothing in Christ (*Galatians 3:27*).
- 10.5.22                   5. Experience of salvation from the flood (*1 Peter 3:20-21*) and liberation into a new humanity (*Galatians 3:27-28; 1 Corinthians 12:13*).
- 10.5.23                   6. Incorporation into the body of Christ and common discipleship in the one body in which racial and social barriers must disappear (*Ephesians 4:4-6*).
- 10.5.24                   Baptism is the sign of the Kingdom. BEM uses the term 'gift' for baptism in relation to infant baptism and 'human response' in relation to the faith of the believer and the faith of the community. In both cases, BEM argues, personal commitment is necessary for responsible membership in the body of Christ.
- 10.5.25                   Further, BEM proposes an order for the baptismal rite as a basis for convergence among the communions which should include at least the following:
- 10.5.26                   1. The use of Scriptures which mandate and interpret baptism.
- 10.5.27                   2. Invocation of the Holy Spirit.
- 10.5.28                   3. Renunciation of evil and the Devil.
- 10.5.29                   4. Profession of faith in Christ and the Holy Trinity.
- 10.5.30                   5. The use of water.

- 10.5.31 And declaration,
- 10.5.32 of 6. that the persons baptized have acquired a new identity as sons and daughters  
of God.
- 10.5.33 7. that the persons baptized have become members of the church, which is  
Christ's body.
- 10.5.34 8. that the persons baptized are called to be witnesses of the Gospel.
- 10.5.35 9. that the persons baptized are sealed by the Holy Spirit.
- 10.5.36 10. That the baptized persons participate in holy communion.
- 10.5.37 This is a remarkable, biblically based order despite ambiguity as to who  
specifically is confessing faith and renouncing the Devil, and what the mode of baptism  
should be. On the positive side, the order affirms the principle of faith, reception of the  
Spirit, new life in Christ and identity with Christ, public discipleship and witness, and  
church membership. The confluence of key kerugmatic elements is impressive: faith,  
reception of the Spirit, identifiable discipleship, and church membership (which is public  
and local, not merely membership in the 'invisible church').
- 10.5.38 Consider the foregoing in relation to the summary George Beasley-Murray  
gives as to the biblical meaning of baptism (*New Dictionary of Theology*, previously  
cited, p. 70). Baptism signifies:

- 10.5.39 1. Union with Christ (*Galatians* 3:27).
- 10.5.40 2. Union with Christ in his redemptive acts (*Romans* 6:1-5; *2 Corinthians* 5:17; *Colossians* 2:11-12; 3:1-4).
- 10.5.41 3. Union with Christ in his body, the church (*1 Corinthians* 12:12-13; *Galatians* 3:26-28).
- 10.5.42 4. Renewal by the Holy Spirit (*Acts* 2:38; *1 Corinthians* 12:12-13).
- 10.5.43 5. Entry into the Kingdom of God because salvation is none other than life under the saving sovereignty of God (*Matthew* 12:28; *John* 12:31-32; *Romans* 14:17; *Colossians* 1:13-14). Beasley-Murray adds that 'water and spirit' in *John* 3 signify the baptism of repentance to which Nicodemus had not submitted and the outpouring of the Spirit which should come with the Kingdom of God. Thus repentance and faith and the re-creative act of the Spirit and entrance upon the Kingdom of God are one complex event.
- 10.5.44 6. Life in obedience to the rule of God, as the main sentence of *Romans* 6:4 indicates: *in order that ... we too may live a new life*, which is illustrated in *Colossians* 3:1-17 and worked out in detail in the Catechetical instruction of the New Testament.
- 10.5.45 The parallels between the BEM proposal and the outline Beasley-Murray gives are striking and register the seriousness with which baptismal theology has been taken in recent years, not only in regard to church relations but, more importantly, in regard to the basic mission of the church as mandated by the Gospel.
- 10.5.46 **Sacrament or Ordinance**
- 10.5.47 A sacrament is a visible sign of God acting in covenant relation with his people.
- The traditional (*Book of Common Prayer*) Catechetical definition of a sacrament is *an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same and pledge to assure us thereof*. Roman Catholic understanding follows from Thomas Aquinas, *the sign of a sacred thing in so far as it sanctifies men*. Both refer back to Augustine who defined it as *the visible form of invisible grace*. Ambiguity has led to divisions in the church. Medieval theology finally settled on seven (Peter Lombard) which were codified in the Roman Catholic Church: Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Order, and Matrimony. From this follow arguments regarding the presence of faith for validity, and whether validity is jeopardized by the unworthiness of the one who performs the sacrament (is it valid *ex opere operato*, i.e, regardless of the worthiness of the performer). The Reformers rejected the five, insisting that only the dominically mandated sacraments are authentically sacraments (Baptism and the Eucharist). Practically all Protestant, Believers Church and other evangelical churches concur, except for the small minority of those who, like the Salvation Army and the Quakers, do not practice the ordinances. In Episcopal Churches Baptism and the Eucharist are accorded higher rank than the other five.
- 10.5.48 Traditionally, Episcopal Theology validates its view of sacraments on the ground that they mimic (in the best sense of that word) the Incarnation. Sacraments visibly manifest God's action, as did the Incarnation, but they are intended to do this in the social context of the body of Christ, the church. In Medieval times they were thought to indelibly mark the soul, and that Baptism, Confirmation, and Ordination are not repeatable.

- 10.5.49 Protestant and Believers Church Christians almost uniformly hold to the representational character of Baptism and the Eucharist, though there are serious differences as to their significance as means of grace.
- 10.5.50 Most established Protestant denominations use the term 'sacrament,' and many also use the term 'Eucharist' But most Believers Church groups use the term 'ordinance' and most eschew use of the term 'Eucharist.' My view is that any Christian can legitimately use any or all of these terms but that, nevertheless, out of courtesy to the Episcopal traditions and for the sake of clarity regarding the theological significance of usage in the Believers Church tradition, the titles Ordinance of Baptism and Ordinance of the Lord's Supper are appropriate.
- 10.5.51 What does 'representation' or 'symbol' mean? For the most part, the positive side of the definition has been weak; the negative side has received greater play out of desire to deny any mechanical or physical transfer of grace. Protestants and Believers Church Christians have insisted that the ordinances are symbols of that which Christ has already done. The ordinances attest to something previously accomplished, namely, faith-commitment to Christ prior to or coincident with baptism, alongside repeated participation in the Lord's Supper
- 10.5.52 But to see the ordinances as merely symbol is too shallow. All Christian liturgical acts (prayers, hymns, readings, sermons) are means of grace in the sense that they are vehicles for the expression of faith and communion with God. Why not the ordinances? After all, their essential character is to attest to the kerugma in dramatic form. (union with Christ in his death and resurrection, and feeding upon Christ till he comes again). Surely the act of participation itself is not intended to be mere symbol, but is related to faith and God's gifts of grace. Rejection of sacramental theology need not empty the ordinances of spiritual vitality. If evangelicals protest displacement of the Lord's Table with the Altar, the voluntarism of evangelical commitment ought to raise spiritual experience to new heights. Denial of *ex opere operato*, or of what Anthony Kenney has called 'priestly magical power,' should not divest participation of spiritual depth. The theological significance of the ordinances in the New Testament reaches to a level deeper than mere symbol.
- 10.5.53 **The theological significance of Baptism**
- 10.5.54 Christ commissioned his disciples as follows (*Matthew 28:19*): *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.* Baptism is a new, once-for-all ordinance, given to the church and is mandated upon all who profess to follow Christ. It is different from the frequent - even daily - ritual washings practiced in Jesus' day at the Temple steps and in many of the religious communities, such as Qumran. Simply stated, those baptized went down into the water (*Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:9-10; Acts 8:38*); they were buried under the water (*Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12*); and they came up out of the water (*Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Acts 8:39; Colossians 2:12*).
- 10.5.55 The meaning of Baptism in the New Testament is a complex of interlocking themes, which I group under the following four headings:
- 10.5.56 First, **Baptism and New Life**. Essentially, baptism is a rite of death and resurrection to new life (*Romans 6:1-11*). It marks the acquiring of a new identity. The Christian is a new creation (*2 Corinthians 5:17*).
- 10.5.57 Baptism is invariably 'faith-baptism,' i.e., the faith-response of the person to Jesus Christ. Note the relation between hearing, believing and baptism in *Acts 10:43-48*; also *Acts 2:38-41; 3:19; 5:31; 8:12; 15:9; 18:8*.

- 10.5.58 The forgiveness of sins is related to baptism (Acts 2:38; 10:43, 47; 22:16; *I Corinthians* 6:11; *Titus* 3:5; *Hebrews* 10:22). Water and Spirit (baptism and reception of the Spirit) are correlatives in regard to entering the Kingdom of God (*John* 3:5).
- 10.5.59 In short, in the New Testament baptism embraces the meaning of the whole Gospel.
- 10.5.60 Second, **Baptism and the Threat of Death.** In baptism the Christian is joined to Christ in his death and resurrection. Paul declares that baptism is a placing of the Christian in the grave of Jesus Christ (*Romans* 1:4). It is a threat to life - the old life. It is being crucified with Christ (*Galatians* 2:20; *Philippians* 3:10). This death is variously identified as death to sin (*Romans* 6:1-11); death to the world (*Galatians* 6:14); and death to self (*Galatians* 2:20). But it is a rising again to new life, the resurrection life of the risen Lord.
- 10.5.61 Thus, baptism is union with Christ in both his death and his resurrection (*Galatians* 3:27). 'Putting on' Christ signifies the re-clothing of the baptismal candidate (which was practiced well into the post-Apostolic era) and speaks to the inner spiritual transformation which conversion brings.
- 10.5.62 Third, **Baptism, Reception of the Spirit, and the Church.** Baptism does not of itself endow one with the Spirit, but there is a kerugmatic confluence in the New Testament of faith, baptism, reception of the Spirit and one's being joined to the body of Christ, which all Christian traditions have bifurcated in one form or another, though the symbolism (though not the practice because of its application to infants) of the Eastern Orthodox Churches is closest to Gospel practice in the New Testament. Conversion, faith, baptism, reception of the Spirit and membership in the church were one, undivided event in the New Testament. The exceptions in *Acts* simply prove the rule (*Acts* 8:16; 10:44; 19:1-7).
- 10.5.63 This is the point at which I take exception to Kurt Aland's otherwise brilliant insights: the evangelistic situation of apostolic days is indeed repeatable. Its constant repetition is the life-blood of the church. The cycle of constant conversions and additions to the church is a necessary aspect of the church's mission to the non-Christian world. It is time to renew commitment to the world beyond the community of faith. This is the significance of the comprehensive theology of baptism in relation to the Gospel in the New Testament. Baptism signifies the totality of God's grace and gifts.
- 10.5.64 The correlation between baptism and reception of the Spirit is evident in the words of Jesus to Nicodemus (*John* 3:5). The critical passage on this matter is *I Corinthians* 12:13. Evangelical evasion of Paul's point has occurred in this century chiefly by denying that in this passage Paul is speaking of baptism; rather, it is claimed that baptism here is spiritual into the invisible body of Christ. Exegesis of the passage does not sustain this thesis.
- 10.5.65 To begin with, there is no hint here or elsewhere that anything less than faith is involved (there is no *ex opere operato* implied, or external effect of water). This is clear from passages I have previously cited, such as *Galatians* 3:26-27 and Peter's denial of the efficacy of external washing (*I Peter* 3:21).
- 10.5.66 Paul is not saying that the Christian is baptized with the Spirit, but that the Spirit is himself the baptizer: he is saying that *we are all brought into one body in baptism in the one Spirit* (Beasley-Murray so renders the sentence). As in *Titus* 3:5, the Spirit is the agent of spiritual renewal and change.

- 10.5.67 Paul is also saying that the Spirit, as the baptizer, places the Christian into the body. This means the local Christian community, the body of Christ in that place, the conventicle of committed men and women who attest to new life in Christ. To be in Christ is to be in the body of Christ. It is concrete and particular, otherwise Paul could not plead for the unity which should prevail in the body whether at Corinth, or Ephesus or elsewhere (*Galatians* 3:27-28; *Colossians* 3:9-11, and the entire context of the unity of the body which Paul is addressing when he wrote *1 Corinthians* 12:13). In this respect, it is inconceivable that the body of Christ should include believers and unbelievers. As well, to bifurcate the church and the body of Christ is to transgress Paul's teaching..
- 10.5.68 In the New Testament the meaning of the Gospel embraces faith, baptism, reception of the Spirit, and the church. The Christian denominations have separated these in various ways.
- 10.5.69 Fourth, **Baptism and Discipleship**. As a rite which is grounded in repentance and faith, baptism points to release from sin's power as well as cleansing and forgiveness, and commitment to a new way of life. Paul says the following about the meaning of baptism (*Romans* 6:7-11):
- 10.5.70 *For he who died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*
- 10.5.71 Baptism marks entrance upon new life. Paul repeats this frequently, as in the extension of the foregoing in *Romans* 7:4-6 and in *Colossians* 3:1-17.
- 10.5.72 The theme is apparently common to the Apostolic tradition. Note 1 Peter 2:24. If, as many scholars think, 2 *Peter* is a baptismal homily the introductory segment reads like a catechism or discipling instruction. Peter says that entering upon Christian faith includes escape from corruption and participation in the divine nature (1:4). He follows this with a superb description of Christian character (1:5-8), concluding with the warning that lacking these virtues is to forget that one was cleansed from his or her old sins, an obvious reference to baptism (1:9) which embraces all that is meant by entrance into the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ (1:11).
- 10.5.73 Conformity to Christ is not mere imitation of Christ. It entails union with Christ such that those who belong to him have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (*Galatians* 5:24). The whole Gospel is embodied in the meaning of baptism. The pattern is indeed the *humiltas* of Jesus (*Philippians* 2:5). But union with Christ means union in the sense of carrying his death in our bodies, the complement of which is to reflect the life of Jesus (2 *Corinthians* 4:10; note also *Galatians* 2:20 and *Philippians* 3:10).
- 10.5.74 The Christian ethical mandate involves not merely a list of prohibitions and virtues. There were many ethical systems in ancient times which reflect fine virtues. The issue of motive force is critical. Nicodemus' question is apt: he was concerned not with the fact *that* moral and spiritual renewal is needed, but with *how* is it possible? The working of the Holy Spirit is to renew sinful human beings into the image of Christ. Baptism attests to that commitment of faith and enabling divine power. Whatever is said about baptism must be able to bear the great theological meaning assigned to it in the pages of the New Testament. The seriousness with which the subject is dealt with in BEM attests to the growing realization among the churches of the importance of this biblical reality.

10.6.0

## The Lord's Supper

10.6.1

### Eucharistic Worship and Fellowship

10.6.2

Late medieval discussions are embraced in the solidification of modern understanding and practices concerning the Lord's Supper. This is not to say that in the centuries before late medieval times little was said. The elements of all subsequent views are there, generation after generation. However, it was in late medieval times that arguments developed into schools of thought which produced ideological focus. These powerful influences moved to reform the Church and they underlie post-Reformation codification.

10.6.3

We may take John Wyclif (1329-1384) as a paradigm of late medieval discussion and as a strong proponent of reform. He vigorously opposed transubstantiation as a fiction calling it a Schoolman's invention, a term and concept which he denied formed a part of apostolic faith. Buttressed by citations from Ambrose, Augustine and Hilary, and argument from the Scriptures and the logic of the issues entailed, he advocated re-affirmation of a spiritual understanding of the sacrament, to which both Lutherans and the Reformed traditions today can lay claim, putting their own understanding upon what *spiritual* and *Christ's presence* mean.

10.6.4

Inherent in Wyclif's treatise *The Eucharist* (in *Advocates of Reform*, tr. Matthew Spinka, 1953) are those crucial elements which, first, occasioned demand for reform and, second, those which divided the Reformers Luther and Calvin and comprise the teaching of the Believers Churches. That his views influenced John Hus and from Hus the reformation impulse in central Europe prior to the Protestant Reformation has been acknowledged.

10.6.5

Wyclif concluded that *the Fathers of the Church never truly believed that that bread was numerically identical with Christ's body* (or the wine with Christ's blood, 59). The senses are correct to perceive bread and wine. *To be means to figure sacramentally*. In the opening pages he runs through some of the rude and satirical ripostes made about transubstantiation, such as whether the priest is actually doing such horrible things as breaking the head, neck and arms of Christ and whether a hog or dog is eating the actual body of Christ if crumbs are picked up.

10.6.6

Rather, he said, the act is sacramental, meaning a distinction between what the eye and the mind see (corporeal and spiritual), i.e., the mind sees in faith through a mirror darkly. *We believe that Christ is present in the consecrated host as in a mirror* (7). He is hidden in the sacrament (12). Indeed, he argued that this is the force of medieval church dogma and that the Schoolmen invented the (later) doctrine of transubstantiation (31). In particular, he cited Augustine, *one thing is seen and another is understood* (8).

10.6.7

While Wyclif strongly affirmed that every predestined layman is a priest (21), he conceded that the Church has with good reason ordained clergy, but not to create idolatry, which worship of the host had become.

10.6.8

Christ, he said, spoke figuratively when he said *this is my body*, just as the statement *Christ is the rock* is figurative. The bread and wine are efficacious signs of Christ's body and blood (58).

10.6.9

From such denial of transubstantiation and ambiguity regarding Christ's presence in the sacrament follow the Protestant Reformation and post-Reformation doctrinal formulations.

10.6.10

There are two key issues: presence and symbol.

- 10.6.11 Lutheran Theology sees Christ to be present in the sacrament while rejecting transubstantiation.
- 10.6.12 Reformed Theology sees the elements to be symbols of Christ's body and blood.
- 10.6.13 Believers Church Theology largely espouses the symbolism view. There is, nevertheless, a pull between the so-called 'Calvinist' symbolist and 'Zwinglian' memorialist views. Seventeenth century Baptists (who largely set the scene for most subsequent Believers Church practice) were divided over the use of the term 'sacrament,' many preferring 'ordinance.'
- 10.6.14 In modern times the Zwinglian memorialist view predominates among Baptists and others of the Believers Church tradition. The Calvinist view of spiritually feeding upon Christ crucified and risen as the Christian's spiritual meat and drink is not uncommon. These argue that more than historical contemplation and symbol are in view; that Christ is present among his people and remembrance of him must be in relation to his substitutionary sacrifice.
- 10.6.15 Today, Reformed (Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Methodist) and Believers Church understanding and practice are virtually indistinguishable. The Lord's Supper is held to be a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice and victory, of bitter cost and triumph. The real presence is held to be to the Christian, not in or alongside the elements, and the communion is held to be with one another as well with Christ. It is the act of the body (the church) in relation to Christ its head.
- 10.6.16 The question (peculiar to Baptists and other Believers Churches) as to whether 'close' or 'open' communion (open only to the baptized) should be practiced is scarcely an issue in the Episcopal and Reformation churches where baptism is the assumed norm. Anything else is regarded as an aberration.
- 10.6.17 Convergence as proposed recently by the BEM document envisions the goal of *conciliar eucharistic fellowship*; that is, agreement to mutual honor of differing traditions. However, a key feature is the concept of *the real presence of the risen Lord* in relation to appropriate performance of the sacrament, which should include *episcopé* oversight for the proper eucharistic nourishment of the laity. There is ample room in this for sacramental and memorialist nuances and ambiguities
- 10.6.18 I add some sentences from the BEM document which form the basis of the appeal for convergence:
- 10.6.19 *Every Christian receives this gift of salvation through communion in the body and blood of Christ. In the eucharistic meal, in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, Christ grants communion with himself (2).* Notice that it is *in the act* (of faith) that this takes place, which is analogous to Wyclif and, in modern times, some Lutheran teaching and that of the Congregationalist, P. T. Forsyth.
- 10.6.20 *The understanding is that there is only one expiation, that of the unique sacrifice of the cross, made actual in the eucharist and presented before the Father in the intercession of Christ and of the Church for all humanity (8).*
- 10.6.21 *...the eucharistic meal is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the sacrament of his real presence ... But Christ's mode of presence is unique ... The Church confesses Christ's real, living and active presence in the eucharist. While Christ's real presence in the eucharist does not depend on the faith of the individual, all agree that to discern the body and blood of Christ, faith is required (13), and in the commentary on 13 they add that the decision as to whether formulae such as that the elements in some mysterious*

way become the body and blood of the risen Christ or whether Christ's presence is to be defined in some other way can be accommodated under the formula of convergence must be left to the individual churches.

10.6.22 *It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood. They remain so for the purpose of communion (15).*

10.6.23 The BEM document aims at complementarity. A number of statements are incorporated which say that *real presence* does not imply re-sacrifice and at the same time there are statements reassuring Reformed and Believers Church Christians as to the once-for-allness of Christ's sacrifice. Nevertheless, Christians outside the Episcopal and some Lutheran traditions have expressed concern that the BEM convergence formula marks a shift from kerugma to sacrament.

10.6.24 **Words of Institution**

10.6.25 It is remarkable, and at times deeply troubling, that at the point of deepest devotion of most Christians, the eucharistic passages vary. The differences, including differences between the Pauline passages and the Synoptic records, do not appear to be irreconcilable. While most scholars assign historical primacy to the Marcan and Pauline texts, I shall take note of their emphases and differences in canonical order.

10.6.26 **Matthew 26:26-29.** It appears that *as they were eating* (20-21, 26; *Mark* 14:18) Jesus instituted a practice that is distinctly Christian, which is offspring of but successor to the Passover meal in the sense of the sign of substitutionary sacrificial deliverance, which tied the disciples to himself throughout their lifetime, until his coming again, not unlike the wilderness wandering until the promised land was reached.

10.6.27 *Matthew* adds *eat* after *take*; but, more significant, the words of Jesus which he records are bidding statements (*drink of it, all of you, 27*) not simply assertions, and the reason for the shedding of blood (*which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins, 28*). This goes beyond *Mark's* linkage of the blood with the new covenant in order apparently to interpret the purpose of the covenant.

10.6.28 **Mark 14:22-26.** Here *Mark* records two striking statements: *Take, this is my body* (22) and *This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many* (24). It is likely that here Jesus is drawing an analogy between the bread and wine of the Passover Meal and his own body and blood and that he now institutes an association between his death with the sin offering of the Day of Atonement, as in *Mark* 10:45 and *I Peter* 1:18-29, with which the Paschal Lamb had not been associated.

10.6.29 Thus the wine of the cup which closed the Passover Meal opened the new era of the Christian rite, and the unleavened bread which commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt signified the final deliverance from sin's bondage which his sacrifice would accomplish. He closes observance of the old rite by instituting the new one. That *this is* declares an identity between the flesh and blood of the paschal victim and the body and blood of Christ of which they are to partake would not have been credible to a Jew.

10.6.30 **Luke 22:15-20.** In *Luke* there is the problem of the longer (15-20) and the shorter (omit 19b-20) texts. The omitted words (as shown in a footnote in the RSV, but not noted in the NIV) are *...which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And likewise the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.* Some think that the longer text is a redaction to restore the bread-cup order.

- 10.6.31 Bruce Metzger reports (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 1971, pp.173-176) that the Committee who edited the text were divided over the question but that the majority favored the longer text as closer to the original. Parallels between the longer text words and the Pauline description convinced supporters of the shorter text that Paul's later report was read back into the text; while those who supported the longer text believe that it reflects knowledge of the primitive tradition that informed the eucharistic practices of the Pauline churches. The weight of manuscript evidence heavily favors the longer text.
- 10.6.32 What of the two cups in this passage? Metzger reports the view of Kenyon and Legg that the first cup refers to verse 16 and the reunion in heaven, but that the second cup refers to the new rite now instituted as a continual reminder of Christ. Jesus shifts attention from the sorrow of their parting to the joy of reunion in the final kingdom.
- 10.6.33 **The Gospel of John.** Many commentators (note, for example, John Marsh, *Saint John*, 1968) hold that the primary motif of the Gospel is eucharistic. Support for this thesis is found in the following passages which embrace major themes of the book: The wedding at Cana (2:1-11). The loaves and fishes miracle (6:1-14) and the Bread of Life discourse (6:15-71). The Passover, including the foot washing and the betrayer (13:1-20). The last discourse and prayer (13:31 - 17:26). The pierced side from which flowed blood and water (19:34).
- 10.6.34 **1 Corinthians 5:6-8.** Paul draws an analogy between Israel in Egypt and the Corinthian Christians: just as the Paschal Meal marked leaving behind the old life in Egypt, so Christians have a Paschal Victim, Christ himself, in commemoration of whom one must set aside old impurities. The emphasis is not upon repeating Christ's sacrifice, but that in view of his *having been sacrificed* our celebratory remembrance should yield a new pattern of life.
- 10.6.35 **1 Corinthians 10:1-22.** By way of analogy from Israel's experience in the wilderness, Paul argues (5) that mere observance (of the Passover, or, of the Lord's Supper) which does not move one from idolatry to true moral renewal (12-13; 21) cannot work *ex opere operato*. The cup (16a) and the bread (16b) express the concept of the common loaf; i.e., the fellowship of the church body at Corinth.
- 10.6.36 **1 Corinthians 11:23-25.** This is the crucial Pauline passage and should be compared with *Mark* and *Luke*. Paul's account may well be the earliest written account of the eucharistic tradition. He declares a dominical mandate for what he writes and practices: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you...* The *anamnesis* (*in remembrance of me*) is unique to Paul. He declares that the true meaning of the rite is remembrance of the atoning death of Christ. Paul affirms that he is passing on the authentic tradition concerning the eucharist.
- 10.6.37 In regard to the bread, Paul adds the words *which is for you*, which are not in *Mark*. I take the two sayings as variants of the common, original, authentic tradition.
- 10.6.38 In regard to the cup, Paul reports the words *new covenant* as against Mark's *of the covenant*, but Paul omits Mark's words *which is poured out for many* (reminiscent of *Isaiah* 53:12). The concept of covenant is generic to Jesus' thought. *New Covenant* suggests the new understanding of their past and future history. What had been promised messianically has been fully and truly fulfilled in Christ's passion, which Christians are to remember, celebrate and think of as inauguration of the age to come (11:26b). All of this bears directly upon Paul's concern (to be developed in the succeeding chapters, 12-14) that the Corinthian Christians have due regard for their assembly as constituting a body in which Christ's concern (as reflected in the Lord's Supper) should be reflected in their own concern for every member of the body at Corinth.

10.6.39                                    **Eucharistic Participation**

10.6.40                                    The New Testament description of the Lord's Supper observance is reasonably straightforward and is unadorned. Practice since then varies among the churches considerably, historically and in modern times. This depends very much upon tradition as well as theological interpretation of the symbolism entailed, or understanding of the reality and mode of Christ's presence among his people, in or alongside the elements, or in the faith of participants. Is the New Testament description a formal order, for example, whether laity may oversee and minister the communion, or whether the laity may partake of both kinds or only of one, i.e. the bread? I propose the following as a reasonable description of the New Testament order:

10.6.41                                    1. Our Lord took bread and the cup.

10.6.42                                    2. He gave thanks over them.

10.6.43                                    3. He blessed them to a new use.

10.6.44                                    4. He gave them to the disciples.

10.6.45                                    5. He bade them 'take eat' and 'drink ye all of it.'

10.6.46                                    6. He indicated the meaning which should be attached to these acts:

10.6.47                                    a) 'This is my body which is broken for you'

10.6.48                                    b) 'This is my blood of the New Covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

10.6.49                                    7. He gave the reason for doing this:

10.6.50                                    a) 'This do for my memorial.'

10.6.51                                    b) 'You (thereby) proclaim the Lord's death ...'

10.6.52                                    8. He ended with a temporal caveat, which Paul repeats: 'until he comes.'

10.6.53                                    9. After they had sung a hymn they dispersed.

10.6.54                                    There is such a thing as eating worthily and eating unworthily. Beyond deep personal questions as to moral and spiritual fitness is the question of formal qualification. Fitness to participate clearly entails regeneration or, as we commonly say, conversion to Christ.

10.6.55                                    There is evidently an evangelical sequence in the implementation of the kerugma. The question raised by some is, *Is the evangelical sequence a formal order?* The sequence is: repent and believe the Gospel; put on Christ in baptism, be added to the church fellowship. This clearly entailed regenerate church membership and it prevented the world from invading the church. How far should churches go in making of the evangelical sequence a formal order? This bears not only upon the question as to the validity of infant baptism, but also on the practices of many evangelical, even Believers Churches, which do not require baptism for participation at the Lord's Table - which is all the more ironic in view of the requirement of baptism in the Episcopal and Reformation tradition churches. And then there are church bodies which do not practice the ordinances at all. How far can churches go in designing their own interpretation and practices? Clearly the evolution of modern democracies allows for such pluralism through the formation of denominations, a concept which I have vigorously defended,

and most readers will be thankful for this heritage not merely of toleration but of religious freedom.

- 10.6.56 In the New Testament, eating unworthily concerns chiefly serious doctrinal error or moral turpitude. In these cases the responsibility is first put upon the individual, but it is also placed upon the church. Exclusionary vices include: Immorality, impurity, malice, covetousness, extortion, idolatry, drunkenness, and railing, as indicated in *I Corinthians* 5:8, 10. To this can be added the exclusionary sentiments expressed against heresy, such as: denial that the Christ could be manifest in the flesh and suffer (*I John*), promoting good works as the basis of salvation (*Galatians*), and corrupting free grace by failing to give evidence of good works (*James*), or schism (*Romans* 16:17).
- 10.6.57 The Lord's Supper is to be understood in a threefold temporal context: First, in regard to the **past** one is to look back to Calvary as the price of redemption. Second, as to the **future** one is to look forward to Christ' return so that such a hope is a purifying hope. Third, as to the **present** one is to look around, within the church fellowship with deep regard for others in the body and for a broken world.
- 10.6.58 The Lord's Supper memorializes Christ in his suffering, death and resurrection. It proclaims the Lord's death until his return. In this respect it is supposed to be powerfully kerugmatic and evangelistic.
- 10.6.59 At the Lord's Supper Christians identify with their Lord. They are called upon to respond in faith and devotion to him, the suffering Son of God, the risen Lord, the coming King. Christians are assembled to meet Christ in faith within the deepest parts of their lives, to partake of the elements as an act of self-giving and self-sacrifice (*Romans* 12:1)
- 10.6.60 The Lord's Supper ought to give evidence of the one loaf, i.e., the unity of the body of Christ in that place.
- 10.6.61 The Lord's Supper is an interim memorial. It has an eschatological motif. It is 'until he comes.' While the life to come is already present in and among Christians, the Lord's Supper points to the final feast in the presence of God himself.
- 10.6.62 The full meaning of the Lord's Supper is summed up in four key concepts: The representative nature of the elements. Remembrance of Christ's atoning death. Proclamation by the rite of the significance of Christ's death for the world. Participation which includes a declaration that Christ himself is present, that he as the host at the table nourishes us and that Christians therefore ought to care for and nurture one another.
- 10.6.63 In their own ways, Baptism and the Lord's Supper are dramatic presentations of the Gospel. Their essential functions are to exhibit commitment and proclaim the kerugma.
- 10.6.64 In about 155 C.E. Justin Martyr wrote a deeply moving *Apology* in which he describes how people 'dedicated' themselves, i.e., became converts to Christianity. He says (in *Early Christian Fathers*, tr. Cyril C. Richardson, 1953, Sections 61, 65, 66):
- 10.6.65 *Those who are persuaded and believe that the things we teach and say are true, and promise that they can live accordingly, are instructed to pray and beseech God with fasting for the remission of their past sins, while we pray and fast along with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are reborn by the same manner of rebirth by which we ourselves were reborn; for they are then washed in the water in the name of God the Father and Master of all, and of Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit ...*

10.6.66 *At our first birth we were born of necessity without our knowledge, from moist seed, by the intercourse of our parents with each other, and grew up in bad habits and wicked behavior. So that we should not remain children of necessity and ignorance, but (become sons) of free choice and knowledge, and obtain remission of the sins we have already committed, there is named at the water, over him who has chosen to be born again and has repented of his sinful acts, the name of God the Father and Master of all. Those who lead to the washing the one who is to be washed call on (God by) this term only. For no one may give a proper name to the ineffable God, and if anyone should dare to say that there is one, he is hopelessly insane. This washing is called illumination, since those who learn these things are illumined within. The illumined is also washed in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets foretold everything about Jesus ...*

10.6.67 *We, however, after thus washing the one who has been convinced and signified his assent, lead him to those who are called brethren, where they are assembled. They then earnestly offer common prayers for themselves and the one who has been illuminated and all others everywhere, that we may be made worthy, having learned the truth, to be found in deed good citizens and keepers of what is commanded, so that we may be saved with eternal salvation. On finishing the prayers we greet each other with a kiss. Then bread and a cup of water and mixed wine are brought to the president of the brethren and he, taking them, sends up praise and glory to the Father of the universe through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and offers thanksgiving at some length that we have been deemed worthy to receive these things from him. When he has finished the prayers and the thanksgiving, the whole congregation present assents, saying 'Amen.' 'Amen' in the Hebrew language means, 'So be it.' When the president has given thanks and the whole congregation has assented, those whom we call deacons give to each of those present a portion of the consecrated bread and wine and water, and they take it to the absent.*

10.6.68 *This food we call Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true, and has received the washing for forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives as Christ handed down to us. For we do not receive these things as common bread or common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Saviour being incarnate by God's word took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food consecrated by the word of prayer which comes from him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation, is the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus. For the apostles in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, thus handed down what was commanded them ...*

#### 10.7.0 **The Mission and Functions of the Church**

10.7.1 The mission and primary functions of the church are given by Christ in the Commission to his disciples (*Matthew 28:19*):

*Go therefore  
and make disciples of all nations,  
baptizing them  
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

10.7.2 This envisions a program of action. It is not merely an invitation to contemplation nor to cultic mysteries for the seeker after the self. The Christian Gospel concerns something divinely accomplished and applied, apostolically attested, to which Christians give witness. Christianity does not exist to seek new divine disclosure or religious wine-tasting but to proclaim the good news of that which God has already done in Jesus Christ: *You shall be my witnesses*, said Jesus (*Acts 1:8*).

- 10.7.3 Given the New Testament definition of the church as an *ecclesia* in the sense of *soma*, what are its primary functions? I suggest five:
- 10.7.4 **1. Worship** (*leiturgia*). The first and foremost ministry of the church is to worship and praise the triune God, the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of life, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The first Christians, along with the Apostles, devoted themselves to the breaking of bread and prayers (*Acts 2:42*).
- 10.7.5 At Antioch, as the Christians worshipped the Lord they commissioned Paul and Barnabas for the first Christian mission (*Acts 13:2*). Paul saw his life as a libation poured out to gain converts to faith (*Philippians 2:17*). This reflects Paul's deeply felt sense of the consecration which took place at Antioch. He speaks of being a *minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the Gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit*. (*Romans 15:16*).
- 10.7.6 In the New Testament church worship fuels the fire of love to reach out to the world for Christ. There is no greater power for evangelism than cohesive worship - not merely the religious exercises of an isolated individual, even in a congregation, but the power of spiritual life which is registered by the presence of the Holy Spirit in an assembly of Christians where the love of Christ is palpable.
- 10.7.7 Augustine recounts the conversion of Victorinus, a famous Roman orator, the record of whose conversion deeply impressed Augustine as he struggled with his own decision to become a Christian. Because of his fame, priests in the church suggested that Victorinus might wish to make his profession privately. But he insisted on the usual public profession, which involved standing on a small dais before the whole congregation to attest to his faith. Augustine writes (*Confessions*, 8.2, tr. William Watts) that as he did so *there ran a soft whisper through all the mouths of the rejoicing multitude, Victorinus, Victorinus ... He pronounced aloud the true faith with an excellent boldness, and every man would gladly have plucked him to them into their very heart: yea, greedily did they snatch him in, by loving of him, and rejoicing for him. These were the hands by which they snatched him*.
- 10.7.8 Christian worship that is orderly, quiet, joyful, deeply devotional and self-giving to God creates a unique mood. The corporate life of the congregation expresses and conveys the grace and power of God (*Acts 4:31*). The warmth of the Holy Spirit touches each person present. As it is ministered, the word of God probes each life. A sense of expectancy opens hearts to the grace of Christ. Without this common life in the Spirit - this reality of the body of Christ - an assembly of people, even of Christian people, is not a church: *while they worshipped ... the Lord said* (*Acts 13:2*).
- 10.7.9 **2. Fellowship** (*koinonia*). Fellowship is the life-blood of the body of Christ. It is not merely transient human affection; rather, it touches the very heart of God and is an unflinching commitment. It reflects the love which binds together Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the unity of the Godhead. John declares that the message concerning the incarnate Lord is *that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ* (*1 John 1:3*, note also *1 Corinthians 1:9*).
- 10.7.10 The church cannot exist as the body of Christ without fellowship. Fellowship is person affirming and person conserving. The love feast which the early Christians observed, usually followed by the Lord's Supper, reflects the close fellowship they enjoyed and upon which they laid great store. Following his conversion, the amazed church at Jerusalem welcomed Paul with *the right hand of fellowship* (*Galatians 2:9*). A major function of the Holy Spirit is to create fellowship (*2 Corinthians 13:14*). Fellowship is the social foundation of the unity of the body and the mortar which binds Christians together in the household of faith. Fellowship creates intimacy and the trust without which a congregation is merely a cluster of discrete individuals.

- 10.7.11 Fellowship serves to create the instinct for common purpose in ministry. It is inclusive. It draws those who are present, including those who are on the way to Christian faith, into the inner life of the body. Individuals are rarely won to Christian faith unless they are first won to Christian people. That fellowship is fueled by love which, like the fingers of the heart which reached out to Victorinus, is the expression of the entire body of Christians present. Victorinus was known to them by name. Their love had gotten its hooks into him and had drawn him to themselves and to Christ.
- 10.7.12 **3. Teaching** (*didache*). The Apostles and apostolic men and women were very careful to instruct new converts in the Christian faith. Indeed, much of the New Testament was written as instruction. Leaders in the church were required by Paul to know the *sure word* of the faith, and *to be able to give instruction in sound doctrine* (*Titus* 1:9). He sent Timothy to Corinth in order *to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church* (*1 Corinthians* 4:17).
- 10.7.13 In *1 Corinthians* 15:3 Paul indicates that the essence of the Gospel is *according to the Scriptures*. The Apostles acknowledged the authority of the canonical Scriptures and their authoritative word concerning Christ was to become Scripture. Thus, in the early generations of the church what is known as the Rule of Faith, the Rule of Life, the Rule of our Tradition, were those truths which were already acknowledged as Scripture (the Old Testament) and the teaching of the Apostles whose writings later comprise the New Testament canon. Christians were taught to say 'this is the pattern of saving faith,' 'this is consistent with the Lord's teaching,' and could quickly identify teaching that was not authentically apostolic.
- 10.7.14 Similarly, in all ages of the Christian faith, churches should become canonical centers devoted to a canonical curriculum. That teaching concerns preparation for Christ as recorded in the Old Testament, and fulfillment of the messianic promises in Christ as recorded in the New Testament. No church can fulfill its mandate unless it is a teaching church. The teaching ministry of the church ought not to focus merely upon what are deemed to be practical homilies considered relevant to current issues of life. Teaching ought to be comprehensively educating in order to develop in communicants a Christian world-view well founded upon comprehensive study of the Scriptures.
- 10.7.15 **4. Loving Concern** (*diakonia*). Among the first appointees to office were those we believe to have been deacons (*Acts* 6:1-6) who were appointed to coordinate help to widows. Epaphras was called a faithful minister of Christ to the Colossian Christians (*Colossians* 1:7). Peter urged Christians *to employ* gifts for the sake of one another; to *render service* as God's strength supplies (*1 Peter* 4:10-11). These terms convey the same sense as the words *serve* and *duty* in *Acts* 6:2-3.
- 10.7.16 Class barriers were gradually broken down, as in the touching example of Onesiphorus (*2 Timothy* 1:16-18) who helped Paul despite his being a prisoner and therefore a social outcast (*2 Timothy* 1:16-18). The Christians at Philippi sent Epaphroditus at some personal risk with help for Paul while he was in prison (*Philippians* 2:25, 30).
- 10.7.17 The worship of God and compassionate ministry are closely linked in the New Testament. Thus the 'collection' for the saints in *1 Corinthians* 16:1 is synonymous with the 'service' of *2 Corinthians* 9:12 and the 'worshipping' of *Acts* 13:2. Mutual recognition and evidence of love through practical help in Christ's name broke down old social and racial prejudices.
- 10.7.18 **5. Evangelism** (*kerugma*). The church today cannot suppose that the evangelistic opportunity and responsibility of Apostolic days no longer exists, either in relation to generational change in the church or in relation to non-Christian society. A

healthy church ministers to the families of its own community with a view to calling them to personal faith in Christ and public, identifiable discipleship; but also, it must reach beyond itself to the world at large.

10.7.19 These comments about the mission and functions of the church surely make clear that it is the total life of the Christian community which best makes an impact on seekers after God and catechumens, but the call to commitment must be public and unceasing. There is something marvelous in witnessing new life born into faith.

10.7.20 In an important sense evangelism is the final act in a series. It is the task of picking the fruit which God has nourished to harvest using the many gifts and ministries of the Christian community. In most cases individuals are won to faith in Jesus Christ in the course of being won to fellowship with Christians within the body of Christ. Thus the church in the New Testament is Christ-centered and Christians in the New Testament are church-centered.

10.7.21 The churches of the New Testament were open to new people. It was easy to feel welcome. They were a remarkable mixture of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. At first, Paul spoke in the synagogues where many responsive persons attended to his teaching (*Acts* 13:43). As he turned to the Gentiles, Paul quickly found many who were responsive to the Gospel. At Philippi it was a river-side place of prayer which the business-woman Lydia the business-woman, already a seeker after God, often visited (*Acts* 16:13-14). At Athens he found both Jews and Gentiles who sought after God (*Acts* 17:17), some of whom believed in Christ (*Acts* 17:34). At Corinth he found Aquila, a devout Jew, and Titius Justus, a devout Gentile, and led them into the Christian way (*Acts* 18:2, 7).

10.7.22 Wherever Paul won people to Christ he established churches (conventicles). They had an open, welcoming character. Paul's efforts resulted in the formation of enthusiastic congregations which then grew rapidly because of their spirituality, warmth and openness to newcomers: *the people held them in high honor. And more and more believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women* (*Acts* 5:13-14). As the churches were strengthened in faith by diligent teaching *they increased in numbers daily* (*Acts* 16:5). Thus mood not method is the primary pre-condition to growth. Effective evangelism follows from devout worship, person affirming fellowship, effective teaching, and loving care. Converts found a new identity among Christians, who valued them each individually, affirmed them and taught them a new way of life. The first Christians found out quickly how important the catechumenate is in the missionary task. People respond to love as bees to honey. Where there is love the number of 'those who are on the way' to personal faith in and commitment to Christ will grow.

## 10.8.0 **The Ministry of Women**

### 10.8.1 **Unreconstructed Minds**

10.8.2 Not a little of what is being said in our time about the role of women in Christian ministry, whether for or against various roles, is silly. A great deal of it is absorbed with questionable assumptions as to the meaning of ordination and the definition of the offices of Bishop and Elder. As well, not a little of the argument against women in certain ministry roles has as its foundation gender-specific priority for males which embraces all social situations because built into the understanding of leadership lurks a concept of authority, and authority, whether vocational, familial or in ordained ministry, is thought properly to belong to males.

10.8.3 The position taken by Pope John XXIII is also one of the chief arguments advanced by many Protestants and Believers Church leaders against women taking certain roles. It is that Jesus' choice of leaders was gender-specific, though this does not

appear to take account of the close friendship Jesus had with women in his circle of disciples.

- 10.8.4 If one were to take precisely and specifically what Jesus did as principles then a case could be made that the following are also qualifications for office in the church (however, it should be borne in mind that Jesus did not give instructions as to the gender of leadership or structure of leadership for the mission mandated to his disciples):
- 10.8.5 First, male Jewish exclusiveness. Second, only residents of Palestine. Third, only married men (as Peter certainly was). Would that exclude Paul? Fourth, use of the Aramaic language, with perhaps a smattering of Greek. Fifth, only men with long hair and beards, wearing robes and sandals. As ridiculous as this sounds, it highlights the difficulty of correlating acts and customs with principles. It is not surprising that, along with the traditional papal claim to the primacy of Rome in Christendom, the authors of the BEM document chose not to engage the question of women and the ordained ministry, leaving those thorny issues to a time when some degree of convergence has occurred.
- 10.8.6 From my standpoint, discussion of the role of women in the Old Testament is scarcely relevant to the issue of leadership in the church, though their roles in the Old Testament range very widely. No one wishes to incorporate many of the common social practices of Old Testament times into Christian practice.
- 10.8.7 Modern Christian practice - I speak of evangelical Protestant and Believers Church practice - in my lifetime has been hypocritical. I have listened to argument from those who stridently speak against women assuming the pastoral role or the office of deacon who just as ardently recruit, send and support women for ministry overseas where they become church-planters, pastors, teachers of (male) pastors, and leaders of churches for an entire region (effectively the ministry they fulfill is that of the office of Bishop). Principle at home is one matter, out of sight practice is another. Further, I know of no church - whether of the Episcopal tradition, the Protestant tradition or the Believers Church tradition - that would not collapse without the ministry of the women.
- 10.8.8 While many New Testament passages are clear as to the role of males, they are not as to the exclusivity principle. Paul greets the hard-working Mary, and Junia (probably a woman's name, *Romans* 16:6-7) who, along with Andronicus, is said to be *distinguished among the Apostles* (if this is a second, lower tier of Apostleship, is it above bishops and elders?). Phoebe is a deaconess (*Romans* 16:1, RSV, which the NIV, a translation by evangelicals, places in a footnote), a practice common among Baptists world-wide, except in the Southern Baptist Convention. And, it is not at all clear that the women mentioned in the order of the diaconate (*1 Timothy* 3:11) are wives of deacons; they may just as well be deaconesses. Paul (*Philippians* 4:2-3) refers to Euodia and Syntyche (themselves in disagreement) as two women who *have labored side by side with me in the Gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*
- 10.8.9 The single most important and most widely referenced passage against the ordination of women and against any general teaching role for women in the church is *1 Timothy* 2:8-15, which ought to be studied in its entirety. The RSV translation reads:
- 10.8.10 *I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion. Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was*

*deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.*

- 10.8.11 Catherine Kroeger's work (*Reformed Journal*, October 1980, also the joint work with her husband Richard Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 1992) on the peculiar verb *authentain*, translated *authority* in verse 12 is for me decisive as to the proper understanding of this passage (the issue is not noisy women any more than it is tiresome men, of which many instances can be cited).
- 10.8.12 Paul is speaking here against the promulgation of licentious doctrines such as the practice in the Temples and cults by promiscuous religious courtesans who claimed to mediate divine mysteries through sexual ecstasy. Paul is speaking against the use of sexual wiles in the promotion of religion, as the entire passage suggests by its emphasis upon women's dress and adornment. He is concerned with seduction in the guise of religion, a common cultic practice of the times in which certain women were supposed to have special access to God and that sexual intercourse with them would yield special religious insight. Thus the passage must be understood in light of Paul's concern about false teachers and false teaching.
- 10.8.13 Confessionally sound teaching by women is clearly a practice in the New Testament. Lois and Eunice taught Timothy (*2 Timothy* 1:5). Older women are urged to be teachers of that which is good (*Titus* 2:3). And, critically important, Priscilla and Aquila jointly instructed Apollos at Ephesus (*Acts* 18:24-28). Of the five references to these co-workers of Paul, three place Aquila's name first in the usual social order (*Acts* 13:2, 26; *1 Corinthians* 16:19); but the two which are specific to ministry place Priscilla's name first (*Acts* 18:18; *Romans* 16:3).
- 10.8.14 In the New Testament, Christians are put into ministry not by ordination but by baptism. This is the foundation of the universal priesthood of believers. Paul is quite specific about this in *Galatians* 3:26-28. Baptism (a term which here embraces the meaning and blessings of the whole Gospel) has profound social implications: it does away with ethnic and racial differences, a social caste system, and gender-specificity. This is a core theological issue, not merely a sociological issue. Paul says:
- 10.8.15 *... for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith . For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*
- 10.8.16 Both men and women are created in the image of God. The term *helper* (regarding the creation of Eve) is used frequently of God and thus does not have any implication of female subordination. That woman was made from Adam's rib simply attests to human unity and the equality of men and women (of one nature). The post-Fall rulership of Adam was not God's purpose in the creation nor, according to Paul in *Galatians* 3:26-28, is it God's purpose in the re-creation in Christ. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon men and women alike. They are equally to develop their God-given gifts, according to Paul in *1 Corinthians* 12-14. Both men and women served together (*Acts* 1:14; 18:26; 21:9; *Romans* 16:1-7, 12-13, 15; *Philippians* 4:2-3; *Colossians* 4:15). Thus women along with men serve in prophetic, priestly and teaching roles.
- 10.8.17 **The Meaning of Ordination**
- 10.8.18 The meaning and practice of ordination may be misleading issues. There is nothing in the New Testament signified by the terms which are employed to suggest the formal ordination procedures developed in different ways by most Christian denominations.

- 10.8.19 A few years ago I chaired an Eastern Canada based Task Force to study Baptist ordination theory and practice in preparation for a Conference at McMaster Divinity College (October 25-29, 1982). My predecessor as President of Atlantic Baptist College, Stuart Murray, prepared a study paper on the concepts of appointment and ordination to ministry in the New Testament. Some of his main conclusions were:
- 10.8.20 The verbs *tasso* and *horizo* and their compounds are never used of the ordaining or commissioning of a pastor. This eliminates at least eighteen of the forty-three times *ordain* and *appoint* are used in the KJV of the New Testament.
- 10.8.21 The words *apokeimai* (Hebrews 9:27), *diatithemi* (Luke 22:9), *epithanaios* (1 Corinthians 4:9) *kataskheuzo* (Hebrews 9:6), *keimai* (1 Thessalonians 3:3), *krino* (Acts 16:44), *prographo* (Jude 4), *proetoimazo* (Ephesians 2:10), and *prothesmia* (Galatians 4:2), each used once in the New Testament, mean to appoint or ordain, but not in relation to the ordination of ministers.
- 10.8.22 The terms *anadeiknumi* (Luke 10:1; Acts 1:24) means public disclosure of an appointment. *Ginomai* (Acts 1:22) is simply the copulative *to become*. The verb *poieo* (Mark 3:14; Hebrews 3:2) means to do or appoint.
- 10.8.23 Of the remaining terms and uses the following can be said:
- 10.8.24 The term *cheirotoneo* combines *cheir* and *teino*, meaning to stretch out the hand, i.e., to signify by voting, hence to appoint or constitute. The term occurs in Acts 14:23 (*appointed* elders) and 2 Corinthians 8:19 (Titus ... has been *appointed* by the churches to travel ...). This indicates choice by vote in the churches, not simply by apostolic authority. Thus appointment by the church, rather than the sense later in the church of ordination appears to be the meaning. Nothing is said about the laying on of hands.
- 10.8.25 The term *tithemi* is rendered *appointed* in 1 Timothy 2:7 and in 2 Timothy 1:11, in relation to Paul's appointment as a preacher, apostle, and teacher. In his case, the action is directly that of God.
- 10.8.26 In John 15:16 *etheka* is rendered *appointed*, meaning assigned by Christ to the missionary task, or commissioned (the parallel meaning in 1 Timothy 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:11).
- 10.8.27 Uses of various forms of *histemi* are of interest. In Acts 1:23 the RSV renders *and they put forward ...*; however, in the Western text the singular verb is used, in other words *he (Peter) put forward*, meaning he proposed their names to the church for election, which was done by lot. Thus, while the Apostles could have made an appointment, the implementation of a democratic procedure *which seeks the mind of Christ*, or leaving it up to divine providence by casting the lot, is noteworthy.
- 10.8.28 The term *kathistemi* occurs frequently in the New Testament. It does not mean ordain in the sense of *tasso* and *horizo*. It simply means to appoint to office, or to put into place. In Acts 6:3 the church selected the seven *whom we (the Apostles) will appoint to this duty*.
- 10.8.29 Cooperative, consensual leadership among the Apostles, Elders and the church seems to be the pattern in the *Book of Acts*. What we call ordination appears to have been the placing into an office, i.e., the commissioning of a person who met certain qualifications agreed to by the whole church.
- 10.8.30 The laying on of hands probably means nominated or chosen by a show of hands, or signified by hand, as in Acts 14:23 and 2 Corinthians 8:19. The church added

its consent and commendation to the task, as in *Acts* 13:1-3. This is consistent with the fraternal mood and consensual decision-making which is indicated in *1 Clement*.

# LAST THINGS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

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## 11.0.0 **The Doomsday Debate and the Glittering Future**

### 11.0.1 **Apocalypticism and Futurology**

11.0.2 In the latter part of the twentieth century futurology has developed as a secular form of prophesying. What future is there for futurology?

11.0.3 Meanwhile, during the past century and a half a great deal of Western evangelical Christianity (United States, Canada, Britain and Europe) has been absorbed with speculation about the time, the nature of, and the sequence of events associated with Christ's return in the end times. There have been periods of apocalyptic frenzy when those, especially of the dispensational schools, have hinted at, and in some cases predicted, the near end of the present age, the secret Rapture, the revelation of the Antichrist and Armageddon. I have attended such prophetic conferences and heard such predictions. They have in some cases amounted to deconstructing Paul's intention to comfort Christians in face of outlandish theories about Christ's return by rewriting his words to read, *Wherefore scare one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:18)*.

11.0.4 As the year 2000 C.E. approaches, many forms of apocalypticism will arise and intensify, including evangelical ones. But they will have nothing that is new to offer.

11.0.5 Apocalypticism has reached into the politics of the West. In the West the discredited political, economic and military apocalypticism of Marxism has been succeeded by a secular ecologically oriented doomsday cult.

11.0.6 Oddly, this intensified and was codified during the incumbency of a Christian President of the United States, Jimmy Carter. The 1980 *Global 2000* report attempted to forecast the state of our planet at the end of this century. The report predicted a planet increasingly afflicted by hunger and malnutrition, the pollution of the environment (including the later hotly contested dissolution of the ozone layer), the prodigal use and consumption of natural resources, and the destruction of the remaining primeval forests and jungles. Because of its status as a Presidential Report and the reputation of scientists who contributed to it, the report appeared to be unprecedentedly authoritative.

11.0.7 Quickly, however, counter-argument came, chiefly from authors such as Julian Simon and Herman Kahn (*The Resourceful Earth*, 1984) who argued that increased global population would produce more minds who would be able to intelligently formulate policies in regard to life expectancy, health care, pollution control, food supply, forms of needed energy, and resource availability which could adequately sustain a much larger global population than the worst scenario Doomsday prophets were foretelling. Mind and muscle could do it, they argued, and the Doomsday cult is simply churning out an oversupply of false bad news.

11.0.8 The drift of modern futurology has resulted in the secularization of prediction, the bureaucratization of change (what to do about 'future shock?') and the politicizing of the future. The future is seen to be fundamentally in the hands of humanity, not in the hands of God.

11.0.9 The battle lines are drawn anew in our time between those who predict a soon-to-come Doomsday (ecological, not divine judgment) and those who are natively inclined to utopianism.

11.0.10 Modern futurology attempts to predict the future by analyzing past and present factors of economic and social life chiefly, it is said, to enable governments to plan for the physical, economic and social needs of their populations. This is done by one or more of three methods: First, content analysis. This follows the method of intelligence reports

which compile data from local sources in an effort to predict mega-trends. Second, amalgamating and averaging the opinions and guesses of experts. Third, extrapolation. This method seeks to project an understanding of the present along a forward moving time line. Most predictions of recent times, while failing to predict the economic future very well (in this respect economists and prophets face similar risks!) appear to have been more accurate in predicting a move away from representative democracy toward decentralization, self-help and direct participation in government, i.e., the promise of 'autonomous man' may be fulfilled in our time.

11.0.11                    **Revival of the Hope Principle**

11.0.12                    Can human beings live without hope? There is a growing consensus in the post-Marxist world that they cannot.

11.0.13                    The core concepts of the major systems of Idealism were inimical to full-blown personhood and a sense of purpose in the universe. Since everything is fixed in the mind of Deity from eternity, freedom is an illusion and eschatology is a myth. Modern Process Theology has sought to relieve this by embedding the divine in the finite process as possibility. Time and change have displaced static Being.

11.0.14                    The metaphysical and economic determinism of Materialism similarly denied the reality of freedom. The universe is not and cannot be open-ended. The failed modern attempt to blend economic and historical determinism with a Kingdom ideal has forced Marxist philosophers such as Ernst Bloch to adopt a more open, possibility-oriented view of history.

11.0.15                    Metaphysically, Christians argue that consistent with the world's being the product of the divine creative act God is not detached from it. He providentially cares for the world. History is linear and exhibits the purposes of God who is personal and of the persons he has created in his own image.

11.0.16                    The modern hope movement asks whether the future can be planned; whether one can go beyond the mythologies of astrology and the manticism of extra-biblical prophetic claims to a rationally based form of prediction, to a form of soothsaying which combines science and vision, i.e., Nostradamus in a white coat. The question remains, nevertheless, that if futurologists along with modern prophets of doom, including evangelical ones, have gotten things repeatedly wrong, is there any reason to think that they can get things right?

11.0.17                    Hope philosophy and theology are attempts to reformulate a Kingdom ideal. They constitute a revival of messianic expectation. Theologically the movement marks a change of mood from concentration upon realized eschatology to task. Implicit are the dangers of over-confidence in human understanding and skill to accomplish renewal and reform.

11.0.18                    A dramatic example of the shift from historical determinism to possibility thinking is that of Ernst Bloch the German Marxist. His new utopian vision is presented in *The Principle of Hope* (3 volumes, 1986 and following) in which he celebrates the creative possibilities of the human spirit. His thesis is that of the *Not-Yet-Conscious* - the anticipation of things that might be which creative thought, even vision and dreaming, can conjure up. This can lead to progress in all fields of human endeavor, whether of technology, medicine, the literary and dramatic arts, and ultimately of philosophy as a coherent explanation of existence. It is a vision of social justice coupled with openness to change and to the future.

11.0.19                    Beyond Bloch's remarkable about-face in regard to his early utopian historical determinism, his work is a stunning return to world-encompassing, open-ended

utopianism which turns its back upon a significant element of German cultural theory, namely, despair (*Weltangst*) about the human condition. In view of the ideological and political collapse of Marxism, Bloch's visionary anthropology and phenomenology are remarkable. They comprise a contemporary restatement of the social and political vision and ideals which moved many to work for economic and social change in the nineteenth century, including Christians who held a post-Millennial view of Christ's return.

11.0.20                    These ideals drove the movement to social democracy in the Western societies on a visionary path quite different from Marxism.

11.0.21                    In an earlier paper which was read at the 1968 University of California centennial year Conference on the Future of Hope ('Man as Possibility,' *The Future of Hope*, ed. Walter H. Capps, 1970), Bloch prefigured the outlines of his later, major work. He begins with dreams. There is nothing in history, he says, which has not been sketched out in advance, i.e., planned in vision or dream. The only indestructible thing (a word-play against fixed determinism) is the *unconditionally indeterminate* (p. 58), namely freedom and hope: *I contend that the world is open, that objectively real possibility exists in it, and not simply determined necessity or mechanical determinism* (p. 62).

11.0.22                    This is the reality of the *Not-Yet*. We live, he says, surrounded by possibility. What ensues depends upon vision and choice. Utopia arrives where the *Not-Yet-Consciousness* makes its appearance. Utopia is thus contemporary and is everywhere present as the living option before humanity. Vision and hope are the torch before us which beckons and shows the way. Reality is not an engine pushing the train from behind. He sees possibility to be the core of Yahweh's statement to Moses, *I will be what I will be*, and the being-in-possibility of Aristotle's metaphysical aphorism (*to ti en einai*). Bloch sees hope as the antidote to the mid-twentieth century ideological collapse.

11.0.23                    Emil Fackenheim adds a further Jewish theological slant to modern hope philosophy. He was for many years Professor of Philosophy at the University of Toronto and an expert on Modern Idealism, especially the idealism of Immanuel Kant. I recall hearing his guest lecture at the University of Western Ontario on radical evil in the philosophy of Kant in which he argued that philosophers had failed to grapple with this dark element in Kant's philosophy and the importance of hope.

11.0.24                    He attributes this failure to the lack of realism in late nineteenth century Left-wing ideology. His criticism of the 'let's do it' philosophy is an apt warning for modern utopians given human propensity for radical evil. His main point (stated also in 'The Commandment to Hope: A Response to Contemporary Jewish Experience,' his paper at the previously mentioned California Conference, which is also published in *The Future of Hope*) is that the Hebrew prophets convey the message of hope as divine command. Israel is commanded not to despair but to live in hope. He adds that the tensions between particularity and universality in the Hebrew Bible, along with alienation and return, extend the paradigm of God's dealings to humanity in general beyond Israel. The key to the prophets is 'God will do it.' Modern utopians have wrongly said 'we will do it.'

11.0.25                    In the Hebrew Bible, says Fackenheim, the Jew is forbidden to despair of God; that to exist as a Jew after Auschwitz is to be committed to hope (p. 83).

11.0.26                    Christian hope is solidly grounded in the Old Testament command to hope in the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

11.0.27                    A distinctly Christian theological formulation of modern hope philosophy is that of Jürgen Moltmann (*Theology of Hope*, 1965; *Hope and Planning*, 1968) which, I believe, runs the risk of advocating the 'we can do it' Kingdom mind-set.

- 11.0.28 Moltmann's view is that hope is a divinely built-in element of human spiritual experience such that if Western theologians give up on God so far as his direct future involvement is concerned (such as giving up belief in the reality of Christ's historical Second Coming), human beings cannot but join forces with atheists to seek a future without God. Humans cannot live without hope.
- 11.0.29 The promise of the coming Kingdom is to be understood, Moltmann says, as implementing its possibilities in the present socially, economically, politically and ecologically. Kingdom vision does not ask for regaining a lost Paradise, but looks to a new day. We are the pre-history of the new future, which is a future open to the translation of vision into societal reality.
- 11.0.30 Moltmann postulates the Kingdom of God as the earthly and visible presence of God in human affairs. This utopian vision embraces renewal of and care for the created order and a new humanity whose energies are re-directed to renewal. This vision must be both extensive (world-wide) and concrete (specific initiatives). For Moltmann the vision aims at overcoming economic estrangement with its attendant miseries of hunger and needless suffering; political estrangement which is characterized chiefly by intolerant nationalism; ecological abuse and wasteful consumption; and racial alienation which, he says, has fostered white supremacy.
- 11.0.31 Hope philosophy and hope theology focus upon economic liberation, political freeing, human emancipation, and earth-care. According to these views, this is the utopia we all should seek as the expression of the human spirit in a philosophy of hope or as the Kingdom vision and programs of a theology of hope.
- 11.0.32 **Evangelicals and Hope**
- 11.0.33 Beyond apocalyptic absorption, evangelical Christians have too often in this century lent credence to the charge that they have such lofty other-worldly Kingdom concepts that they are of no earthly good.
- 11.0.34 This has been reinforced by the evangelical tendency to react (justifiable in many instances) to the eclipse of God in modern thought and to the deification of the human spirit. By aligning themselves with critics of modern humanism, evangelicals have at the same time given the impression of denigrating actions which aim to conserve the environment and alleviate the problems of humanity.
- 11.0.35 Noteworthy examples can be multiplied. Evangelicals have resisted Liberal Theology's pervasive concept of the perfectibility of human nature based upon upward moral as well as biological evolutionary momentum while appearing to ignore the results of scientific research and technological innovation. Historically, they have highlighted views which argue that history uncovers the universality of sin (as the Cambridge historian Herbert Butterfield said) while failing to speak of God's providential working in history (which Butterfield strongly affirmed). Similarly evangelical commentators agree with analysts who deplore certain modern trends (such as Petirim Sorokin, Henry Fairlie, Karl Menninger, Christopher Lasch and Ernest Becker) and find a welcome hearing among evangelicals without the counterbalance of citing more positive elements in the books of these and others.
- 11.0.36 Evangelicals have emphasized the expectancy issue in relation to the promise of Christ's return and the sequence of events associated with his return and the nature of the Kingdom he will establish, but they have said little about the existential dimension of hope. The philosophy of hope and the theology of hope have contributed richly, if controversially, to this aspect of the doctrine.

11.0.37 I speak, for example, of Emil Fackenheim's comment that the Jew was forbidden to despair of God, or of Victor Frankl's recounting of the role of hope for survival in Auschwitz (*Man's Search For Meaning*, 1963). In this respect evangelicals have tended to side with Job in his darkest moments (*my days ... are spent without hope*, Job 7:6) rather than with New Testament injunctions to build life on hope (Paul: *we are saved by hope*, Romans 8:24; Peter: *born anew to a living hope*, 1 Peter 1:3; and the writer of Hebrews, *we have hope as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul*, Hebrews 6:19).

11.0.38 Cosmic hope entails confidence in linear progress to a providentially defined goal, confidence that evil will be judged and inequities equalized, and confidence that God's ways will be vindicated in a Kingdom of righteousness. That evil may intensify at the close of the age before Christ's return is no excuse for Christian withdrawal or apathy.

## 11.1.0 **The Emergence of Historiography**

### 11.1.1 **The Modern Mood**

11.1.2 A significant if not universal trend among historians in recent years is the relativizing and mythologizing of history along with the deconstructionist diminishing of concrete historical data and the validity of historical interpretation. Like the understanding of history among the Greeks history has become *mythos*, as attacks on the historicity of the Holocaust have shown.

11.1.3 It is a nice question as to whether post-modernism in literary criticism and historical analysis rejects rationality and knowledge (which would be a startling rejection of the Enlightenment ethos) and whether it denies any reality apart from language and the feelings of the interpreter. Is there a reality out there which historians can accurately report and validly interpret and, once done, should the reader honor authorial intent? Are the opinions of interpreters more important than the texts they deconstruct?

11.1.4 Unless there is such a thing as narrative history and, along with it, authentic interpretation as to the meaning (truth) to be gotten from the study of history, then the Bible is a vacuous book. Historical data are the stuff of analysis and one must not evade the reality of actual happenings by the deconstructive philosophy of how events are conceptualized.

11.1.5 Further, are we ready to quickly and easily evacuate personal responsibility from historical understanding by arguing that social and structural conditions either blind otherwise respectable people or that circumstances of economic stress or war prevented them from opposing genocide? Recently published studies show that ordinary, otherwise respectable ordinary Germans enthusiastically took part in victimizing Jews in the period leading up to and including World War II, to say nothing of the toleration of Nazi ideology by the philosopher Heidegger and other intellectuals both secular and religious.

11.1.6 Gertrude Himmelfarb has said that post-modernism, including historical relativism and literary deconstruction, lead not only to our modern moral unseriousness and relativism but as well to intellectual nihilism. Writing before the release of recent studies about the complicity of ordinary Germans in the Holocaust, Himmelfarb writes of Lionel Trilling's essays (*On Looking Into The Abyss*, 1994, p. xi),

11.1.7 *In almost every essay, the Holocaust stands as a rebuke to historians, philosophers, and literary critics who, in their zeal for one or another of the intellectual fashions of our time, belittle or demean one of the greatest tragedies of all time. Historians who think it the highest calling of their profession to resurrect the 'daily life of ordinary people' can find little evidence in the daily life of ordinary Germans of the overwhelming fact of life - and of death - for millions of Jews; those who look for the 'long-term' processes and*

*impersonal 'structures in history tend to explain the 'short-term event' in such a way as to explain it away; and those seeking to 'deconstruct' the history of the Holocaust as they deconstruct all of history come perilously close to the 'revisionists' who deny the reality of the Holocaust.*

11.1.8 She adds that for many post-modern historians, philosophers and literary critics there is no reality but only language, no philosophy but only a play of mind, no morality but only rhetoric and esthetics, and no history but only the inventions of the commentators. History is philosophy, religion, culture, art, but not something that deals with hard data, careful exegesis and credible interpretation based upon archival research. All traditional history, not only the Bible, suffers the same fate in this perspective. It rejects the possibility of falsification and the possibility of historical truth. If the reality of the Holocaust can be denied, what remains to affirm historically so far as the roots of the Christian faith are concerned?

#### 11.1.9 **Greek and Roman Historiography**

11.1.10 Philosophically, the Greeks saw history in mythological terms. As to practical, day to day understanding, they saw history chiefly as nature (*physis*) unfolding itself rationally through the inherent Logos principle, but also as irrational. At the personal level the chief cause which moves events is the human drive, understood to be a divine urge, or divine madness: whom the gods would destroy they first make mad, as the lives of heroes and villains demonstrate. The endless succession of events entails a dialectic of time - the cycle of rise and fall, of conflict, of polarization of opposites (as proposed by Empedocles).

11.1.11 Epicurean theory was based on deterministic atomism and was thus behavioral and hedonist, without a sense of history. They rejected any controlling or interpreting principle except pleasure (need satisfaction), as Epicurus makes clear in his letter to Menoeceus, any activity by the gods, or any immanent rational or divine principle. Chance and necessity are critical factors of life, for good or ill. The wise man prudently seeks pleasure while he may.

11.1.12 Stoic theory was more cosmology than historiography, as Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* shows. The Stoic philosophers adapted the Logos concept as the inherent cosmic principle of intelligibility in the sense of inexorable destiny or fate, which they called justice (*dike*). Their social theory was more fully developed than the granular hedonism of the Epicureans. Civilized life is that of the *polites kosmou* - the citizen of the world, which concept reflects the unity of their grand scheme of the immanent cosmic Logos. The prudent man knows his place or role in the universe. The empire is a divinely inspired political and social manifestation which the Emperor epitomizes, as Marcus Aurelius the last of the great Stoic philosophers declares. The process is fixed. There is no place for providence, only for *dike*.

11.1.13 Roman thought concentrated upon the theory and functions of society, the *polis*, whether of an individual city or the Empire as the expression of a divinely given and sanctioned order, an order which is reflected in the life-cycle of nature annually. History serves a practical social, political and, at times, ethical purpose as memory of events and of biography, the witness of the ages. To achieve this, history may be carefully factual (as in Cicero) or a lively, embellished account which, as an art form, inspires and motivates the reader or listener (note Livy's 'the noble lie,' which is not unlike some deconstructionist theory today).

11.1.14 As biography, history shows how to turn disadvantage to advantage, but advantage (such as military victory) has within itself the seeds of its own destruction. History shows how men succeed but also how within the success there lurks the inevitability of failure. This is not a moral issue. Success or failure are their own

justification in the order of things: what goes up must in the nature of things come down. This is the dialectic of time and the polarization of opposites.

11.1.15 Thus while the Empire was seen to be a divine gift and ordering, its cycle of life was interpreted biographically and in terms of the seasonal life-cycle. The gods represented forces at work in nature for or against humanity. Their goodwill must be preserved. Educated men and women of the Empire frequently demythicized the gods into cosmic principles or immanent, impersonal forces which must be acknowledged and honored. Truth or falsity in religion was irrelevant to many intellectuals.

11.1.16 A form of Platonic Idealism legitimized the State. The State was regarded as a concrete manifestation of an ideal form. The ideal of justice, which is common to humanity, is embodied and implemented in the commitment to justice in the State. Philosophy seeks to legitimize the claim to power rather than to be the fountain of practical wisdom. Consolidation of power in the hands of the Caesars (first century B.C.E. - first century C.E.) was justified on grounds of need to conserve values in the face of threatening social and political chaos and was mythicized in the deification of the Emperor (the Imperial Cult). Enrollment of the Emperor in the Pantheon served the purpose of acknowledging the divine source of the republican ideal which was conceived to be embodied in him (citizens and others were intended to live the civilized life which he represented and embodied). Early Christians strongly resisted this deification and identification while affirming their desire to be good citizens of the Empire.

11.1.17 **Early Christian Historiography**

11.1.18 Early Christian historians were chroniclers desiring to exhibit the historical authenticity of their faith as regards the Incarnation (in the Nicene record and declaration) and to see Emperor Constantine's conversion and the growth of the Church as the arrival of the Kingdom. They were wrong about the latter, but they at least were attempting to recount historical facts and were attempting to interpret them as objectively significant. History for them was not merely presentation of the historian's own art. They include Eusebius of Caesarea (c.260 - c.340), Sulpicius Severus (c.363 - c.420/5), Socrates (c. 380 - 450), Sozomen (early 5th c.) and Theodoret (c.395 - c.458). Augustine (354 - 430) turns chronicling into a Christian philosophy of history. What did they do which the Greeks and Romans had not done? It will be clear that Christian historiography, and therefore eschatology, is based upon the Old Testament doctrine of the creation of the world by God, the providence of God, and claimed prophetic disclosure of the purposes of God in history seen to be linear, from a beginning to a divinely assigned ending.

11.1.19 *Luke* is an accurate and orderly account. It is written as an authentic record. This is the intention of Luke in his writing of the Gospel named after him and the book of *Acts*. This is implicit in the writings of the early Church Fathers even when, as in the case of Origen, there may be a tendency at times to denigrate the earthly. The mood of early Christian writing is powerfully conserving of historical data and is anti-Docetist and anti-Gnostic.

11.1.20 Early Christian historical writing assumes a creationist perspective in which the one true, personal God is at work providentially in his creation, not the pagan view of our attempting to manage capricious deities or yielding to inexorable and inscrutable fate.

11.1.21 This historiography involves a two-fold perspective, namely, prefiguration and preparation in the Old Testament, with fulfillment in the incarnate Lord, the Redeemer, and final fulfillment at his Second Coming to establish his Kingdom. Included are moral values which the lessons of history and biography convey. Inevitably Christianity implied a metaphysic, but it was a metaphysic which honored the created order as the handiwork of God the personal Creator and Sustainer. Early Christian historiography

stressed facticity (Ignatius, Athenagoras, Irenaeus), Christians as heirs of promise which is being worked out in history (Barnabas), the purpose of the personal Creator not inexorable world fire (Justin Martyr), the personal redeemer as Instructor not an impersonal Logos as seminal reason (Clement of Alexandria), vigorous rejection of Gnostic anti-historicism (Irenaeus against Valentinus).

11.1.22 The early Christians instinctively dissociated themselves from the demythicizing method of ancient Idealism while continuing the quest for a metaphysical language which would be adequate to express the truth about the Incarnation of the Son of God. History is real, not an illusion. God's actions in history are specific in time and place, they devolve upon the historical Jesus Christ, and they anticipate Christ's Second Coming as historical event not merely as a conception which will never become historical.

11.1.23 **Augustine: A Christian Philosophy of History**

11.1.24 The Christian chroniclers recount the unjust persecution of Christians, the irrationalities of paganism, the granting of toleration under Lucinius and Constantine, and full recognition of Christianity by Constantine. This is understood to be the handiwork of God. The Augustan ideal of prince and the divine purpose combine in the Imperial beneficent implementor (Eusebius, *Church History*, 9.6-9, 10.4).

11.1.25 Christianity displaced paganism as the soul and spirit of the Empire. The Augustan ideal was reinterpreted in relation to the Scriptural purposes and providence of God: the Empire and the Christian Emperor are God's instruments, just as kings were in the past. The Empire ideal achieves theological significance among Christians: God, not the gods, grants the blessings of life in the Empire. The divine *politeia* has arrived. If wrong-headed, at bottom this is a view of unfolding history under the providence of God.

11.1.26 Latin fathers such as Lactantius, Ambrose and Prudentius adopted the view taken from *Deuteronomy* 28 that God blesses those who honor him and judges those who disobey him. Edicts against pagan worship, just rule, public acknowledgment of dependence upon God and other Christian acts and virtues when spoken of and implemented in the public domain were thought to guarantee peace and prosperity. Mankind was seen by Christians to be progressing through ordered, successive ages toward maturity, which was thought to be beginning.

11.1.27 Then crisis struck, which forced a rethinking of the then current Christian understanding of history.

11.1.28 Late in the fourth century Christian imperialist sentiment came under intense pressure when in 410 Alaric sacked Rome. The fall of Rome and worsening instability powerfully rejuvenated pagan sentiment and undermined the Christian view of God's providentially favoring the Empire following Constantine's conversion. Dissolution of Roman power lent credence to the pagan charge that abandoning the gods for Christianity had brought disaster. The concept of the Christian divine *politea* - of the Kingdom of God as arriving - was in jeopardy.

11.1.29 This is the issue which Augustine addresses in the City of God. His conclusion was fundamentally at variance with popular Christian opinion of the fourth century.

11.1.30 It is a mistake to conclude that an abstract psychology about the will and that Platonism or Neo-Platonism dominate Augustinian thought. His use of these categories serves to distinguish the Christian creationist and historiographical perspective from its Platonist, Manichean and fatalistic contemporaries.

11.1.31 For Augustine conversion which results in spiritual renewal entails transformation of one's world view, including history, without which renewal is not

adequately grounded. He reviews the sense data basis of human knowledge and the operation of reason (perception and understanding) in the context of respect for the Creation. The role of reason is to understand the self, the world and God. The knowledge of God is based on Scripture teaching which combines with intuited certainty and parallels the philosophical quest for truth. But human capacity for distorting perception of the data necessitates revelation and illumination, which God gives historically through the Scriptures and climactically in the historical Incarnation of the Son of God. Thus the importance of empirical and historical data, and the confluence of revelation and reflection are acknowledged and held together consistently.

11.1.32 Human alienation results from native depravity and is expressed by the inclination of an evil will. Human beings are afflicted by imperfect piety (they do not will good entirely). The result is weakening of reason and the build-up of error through false opinion. Finally, this bad condition is reinforced by custom and habit.

11.1.33 Genuine spiritual response to God and spiritual renewal through Christ involves three interlocking elements: First, rejection of old conceptual schemes (Platonist, Skeptic, Manichean) since they failed to furnish adequate answers philosophically, they failed to give peace to the conscience, and they failed to re-orient life ethically. Second, willingness to accept the biblical frame of reference which includes the key categories of Creation, Fall, Grace, Redemption, the People and Kingdom of God. Third, unswerving devotion to God based upon an inner conviction as to the truth of his revelation, not unlike the meaning of faith as conviction as to truth of the indemonstrable axioms of a science (the *archai*) in Aristotle's discussion of the foundation of belief in their truth. For Augustine a Christian world view is built into the meaning of conversion.

11.1.34 It is within this frame of reference that Augustine develops his concept of time, which has dominated all theories of time in the West ever since. Time is a function of creation. The universe is not formed from pre-existing matter. It is not an emanation from the being of God. It is not co-eternal or consubstantial with God. It is an eternal act. Augustine breaks with the Parmenidean tradition that Being is one and immobile to declare that God freely acts in creation. Why did God create? Because he thought it best. What was he doing before the creation of the world? Preparing a place for those who ask silly questions, said Augustine!

11.1.35 For Augustine, eternity is timelessness (*Confessions* 11.,13) or immediacy: *in the eternal nothing is flitting, but all is at once present, whereas no time is all at once present* (11.11); *thy today is eternity* (11.13); *...but to be, now, for that is eternal: for to have been, and to be about to be, is not eternal* (9:10. Augustine does not purport to solve the problem of the nature of eternity. He accepts that God is infinite and is absolute being, but rejects that absolute being excludes personhood and action.

11.1.36 Time came into being with the world. The first moment of creation is the first moment of time. God *creates* time. Three distinctions illuminate the nature of time (11.14): (a) *If nothing were passing there would be no past time.* (b) *If nothing were coming there would be no time to come.* (c) *If nothing were there would be no present time.*

11.1.37 Time is the measure of motion. This is Augustine's well-known contribution to Western philosophy: *we measure therefore, even whilst it passeth* (11.21). Nevertheless, he remains puzzled about the nature of ultimate reality, the eternity of absolute being, the nature of the creation including space as well as time, the irreversibility of time, and persons in the final eternal state. He concluded that *time is nothing but a stretching out in length, but of what, I know not; I measure the motion of a body in time, and the time itself I do not measure* (11.26). This conception of time is foundational to Augustine's view of history, God's providential working in history and his concept of the Kingdom.

- 11.1.38 When writing history, facticity is important. Despite awkward discrepancies the Biblical narrative is dependable. Augustine believed that the Holy Spirit allowed authorial discretion. One person constructs narrative one way, another in a different manner (*On the Harmony of the Gospels*, 2.52). But authenticity and honesty are crucial: *for as statements adduced in evidence must not be false, neither ought they to favor falsehood* (Letter 28.5, to Jerome) Well-intentioned falsehoods will not do (28.4).
- 11.1.39 What factors played into Augustine's thinking as he struggled with a Christian understanding of history and the Kingdom? It is fascinating to speculate about the immediate circumstances of the military and political crises and the apocalypticism which had gripped the Empire which attended and served as the backdrop to Augustine's writing of his massive re-interpretation of history, *The City of God*. Peter Brown (*Augustine of Hippo*, 1967) suggests approximately twelve years: Books 1-5 by about the year 413; Books 6-10 by 415; Books 11-13 by 417; Books 14-16 by 418; Book 17 by 420 and Books 18-22 by the year 425.
- 11.1.40 I believe that Augustine had a specific structure and direction of thought in mind from the early years of his conversion, but it is difficult to know what sorts of eschatological theory played into the development of his thought apart from his reaction against both the Idealism of his youth and the Christian euphoria generated by the conversion of Constantine and the ensuing relative peace and prosperity.
- 11.1.41 As early as the year 389 in *On the True Religion* he developed an analogy between the days of creation representing stages of life leading to the perfection of the soul and the stages of society leading to the heavenly people (27.49-51, note *City of God*, 11.30-31). In another relatively early work in approximately the year 400 he develops his later much used concept of the earthly and heavenly cities, Babylon and Jerusalem (*On Catechizing the Uninstructed* 20.36; 21.37) and the six ages of the world (22.39) which are broadly qualified by the concept of the old and new dispensations.
- 11.1.42 In Books 1-10 Augustine concentrated upon refuting the critics of Christianity who, in light of the current disasters including the sack of Rome in 410, had alleged that the troubles of the Empire were due to forsaking the gods. He engages questions concerning the providence of God in relation to the current troubles. These were written by about the year 413, at least by 415. He then attempts a Christian understanding of history. Books 11-14 deal with the origin of the Two Cities, the earthly and the heavenly. Books 15-18 deal with the progress and relations of the Two Cities historically. Books 19-22 bring him to his goal, which is an exposition of the final end of the Two Cities.
- 11.1.43 Creation and time are the contexts for ordered linear historical process which has divinely given significance and ends. History reflects purpose. This is rationally and spiritually discernible in light of the biblical revelation. We discern the trends and their significance in history; we do not, and must not, impose them upon history.
- 11.1.44 Augustine draws an analogy between the days of creation and the meaning of history. Into this he weaves the concept of the old and new dispensations, the Two cities, earthly society and the heavenly kingdom, Babylon and Jerusalem (*On true Religion* 27.29-51, 53; *On Catechizing the Uninstructed* 19.31; 20.36; 21.37; 22.39-40; *City of God* 11.1, 30-31; 14.28; 18.54; 19.17). The six days of Creation represent six ages of humanity and six ages of the world:
- 11.1.45 The first day signifies the period from Adam to Noah, namely the period of humanity's historical infancy. The creation of light signifies the promise of the Redeemer.
- 11.1.46 The second day signifies the period from Noah to Abraham, humanity's childhood. The parting of the waters of the firmament symbolizes the Ark and salvation.

- 11.1.47                   The third day signifies the period from Abraham to David, which is the period of early manhood, of youthful vigor and fruitfulness, the ministry of the prophets, and the giving of the Scriptures.
- 11.1.48                   The fourth day signifies the period from David to the Captivity, It is the period of a happy start but of a somber close and a pitiable state because of humanity's fall into sin and servitude.
- 11.1.49                   The fifth day signifies the period from the Captivity to the birth of Christ, which is analogous to later manhood. This is the period of judgment, of the scattering of God's people among the nations and their wandering.
- 11.1.50                   The sixth day signifies the period from Christ to the (then) present, of humanity's old age, the fullness of time, the presentation of the Messiah and the preaching of the Gospel.
- 11.1.51                   Is there a seventh day in this analogy? It appears to be the death which awaits all humanity and entering upon the final Kingdom. The seventh day is God's Sabbath, the final stage, the day of the New Humanity and the New Jerusalem.
- 11.1.52                   Augustine complains that apocalypticism tends to magnify one's own problems, but viewed historically the current troubles were not as bad as they could be, he said. God's mercy is still evident. The Christian lives in hope because a divinely ordered end is in view. The present Kingdom is not the final kingdom, nor is any earthly peace and prosperity the Christian final Sabbath rest. There is more to the divine ordering of history than the *Pax Romana* - the peace and stability that had been the hallmark of the Empire.
- 11.1.53                   Faith discerns two societies in the making.
- 11.1.54                   There is, first, the city created by humanity, Babylon, the Pax Terrana, the Pax Romana. This is the city of human bondage due to sin, the old dispensation. While 'Jerusalem' symbolizes the heavenly city, earthly Israel and the earthly Jerusalem are as much part of the unredeemed earthly city as is the remainder of earthly society. Augustine concludes that *neither the Augustan Imperium nor any other earthly kingdom* can be the Kingdom of God, though any earthly kingdom may be an instrument of God's providence.
- 11.1.55                   Second, there is the heavenly city, the City of God, the Jerusalem which is on high, the *Pax Caelestis*. In the heavenly city the righteousness of God will reign supreme and the love of God will be its norm. This is the hope which in the meantime anchors faith and inspires devotion and responding love.
- 11.1.56                   Augustine concludes that all human societies are flawed and that the Christian cannot pin his hope on any earthly kingdom.
- 11.1.57                   Earthly kingdoms serve self-interest because human nature is flawed by pride and error. Rome itself was built on greed and conquest, he said, upon the myths of the gods and upon the political myth of the divine Caesar. Ultimately it is impossible to sanctify paganism. Like all human societies the Empire was founded upon an illusion and continues to be an illusion. No earthly kingdom can be the City of God.
- 11.1.58                   History is a teleological process based upon the doctrine of creation and providence and upon the promise of redemption through Christ. Through the revelation of the Scriptures which guide insight one can perceive what is going on in the things that are happening. Augustine's view represents a Christian empiricism and respect for history

which is less overlaid by the Platonism inherent in the view of early Alexandrians such as Clement and Origen.

11.1.59 History discloses neither the anthropomorphic caprice of the gods, nor fortune and fate, nor the inexorable movement of an inherent impersonal Logos principle. Fortune and fate are intellectually ridiculous and morally abhorrent (*City of God* 4.33; 5.1; 7.3; 12.13). History discloses the purposes of the personal Logos, the providential acts of God, not chance or blind force. The irrationalities of history are paradoxical but they do not leave us in unreason and despair. The progress of history is linear and the ultimate justification of God's actions in history is moral. They are not founded upon fate but upon freedom and responsibility.

11.1.60 The inner power of the Two Cities is love, but of two different kinds. That of the earthly city is not really love but self-interest and egoism. That of the heavenly city is the love God who is the source and inspiration of all that is good. Redemption is not a trans-empirical connection between the soul and the Absolute (Plato), nor is it to be achieved by habituation (Aristotle), nor can it be founded upon a myth (the Imperium). Redemption is through regeneration, and regeneration is attended by and finally is based upon categories as to the nature of reality which are unique to the creationist view of the world. Redeemed men and women are part of societies which are mixtures of good and bad. The Christian must live pragmatically, with insight, and in hope of the final Sabbath of the soul.

11.1.61 Augustine teaches that revelation alters history but that it is not to be identified with history even though through revelation we understand something of the providential working of God in history. Modern theology has tended to fall back on revelation being myth or symbol in the sense that revelational events need not be identified with actual historical events. Millennial theology has tended to focus on a time-table which tends to generate apocalypticism. None of the modern Christian traditions has captured the finality of the Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection, the descent of the Spirit, and the dynamic which is inherent in the moment of Gospel preaching and reception which transforms the categories of a world view. This is the central feature of Augustine's philosophy of history and eschatology. This is what makes it eschatological but not apocalyptic. It is in this sense that P. T. Forsyth could speak of the Cross not only as a datable historical event in the past but as a new beginning, of the Christian actually being in Christ, of the Kingdom actually being present, of the triumph over sin and death being actual now, and thus of a Kingdom which is not of this world yet is both present and to come.

## 11.2.0 **Evangelical Approaches to the End of the Age**

11.2.1 During the past century and a half in America, Britain and many parts of Europe, four main views dominate Protestant and Protestant evangelical understanding of Christ's return. These are the A-Millennial, the Post-Millennial, the Pre-Millennial and the Dispensationalist views. Debate between proponents of these views has been vigorous, not always courteous, and at times has been vitriolic.

11.2.2 In modern times the Episcopal traditions largely have either avoided or ignored this topic and debate, apart from the occasional individual who has espoused an eschatological cause, notably some British Anglicans. The Eastern Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Church have simply hinted at the final judgment but have not engaged the biblical data concerning Christ's return to any significant degree. The confessional statements written at Vatican II said nothing about Christ's return, except for brief allusions to final judgment. *The Common Catechism*, 1975, which was edited jointly by Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians contains no section or discussion about Christ's return. Similarly, confessional statements of the Eastern Orthodox churches say little about end times, except to affirm the final, cosmic Lordship of Christ.

11.2.3                    **A-Millennialism**

11.2.4                    This perspective predominates in Presbyterian and Reformed life and is the underlying assumption of much of confessional Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theology. There has been little interest in eschatology in the mainline Protestant churches which were heavily influenced by Liberal Theology except for interest in Realized Eschatology, which may be regarded as a form of the A-Millennial view.

11.2.5                    A-Millennialism is a misnomer. Technically, Christians who hold this view do not deny the reality of the millennium or make it merely myth or symbol. They interpret the thousand years of Christ's reign to mean something other than a literal thousand years, but what the concept identifies is an historical reality which involves an historical period of time.

11.2.6                    A-Millennialists believe that the millennium refers to the literal realization of Christ's Kingdom through the Church and its mission. The concept of the millennium signifies the church age, or it means the binding of Satan during the Church age by reason of Christ's death and resurrection, or, in a more general sense, the millennium is the on-going realization of Christ's Kingdom historically. A-Millennialism is belief in a realized, or being-realized, millennial era. Augustine took pains to denounce millenarianism (*City of God* 20.7,8) and suggested that the binding of Satan means his being restrained so as not to subvert further those who are to be freed by the Gospel.

11.2.7                    Donald Bloesch, who espouses a form of Post-Millennialism within the framework of a modified A-Millennialism, comments that A-Millennialism too readily falls into Church imperialism by identifying the Kingdom with the Church, it removes the element of expectancy from eschatology, and it spiritualizes what appears to be a final earthly Kingdom of Christ.

11.2.8                    On the A-Millennial view the return of Christ, the resurrection, the end of the world, and the last judgment are coincidental in time. This was for hundreds of years the received teaching of the medieval church, the Reformation churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

11.2.9                    Many commentators question that what appears to be a symbolic interpretation of the thousand years is exegetically warranted and that identification of the millennial glory with the glory of the missionary church triumphant is unrealistic, especially in the so-called post-Christian world.

11.2.10                   **Post-Millennialism**

11.2.11                   On this view the millennium is either a literal period of one thousand years or is a symbol for the church age *following which* Christ will return to personally head his earthly kingdom.

11.2.12                   Many Protestants, including Reformed Churches, Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists and Baptists espoused this view. It informed the marvelous commitment of Christians in the late nineteenth century to political and social change. Christians saw themselves as workers together with God *to bring in the Kingdom*, the crowning finale of which will be Christ's personal return. Personally, if I could find an adequate exegetical basis for Post-Millennialism it would be an attractive option because it inspired commitment to help and evangelize fellow human beings. This view generated a far more positive attitude than that of pre-millennialists and dispensationalists who spent their time analyzing worsening conditions prior to Christ's return and tended to stand back from a perishing world.

11.2.13                    Factors cited in support of this thesis included the growth of the Christian world mission during the nineteenth century, Bible distribution, the development of public education, the growth of Christian ideals, the spread of economic prosperity, the creation of social programs to lift people out of poverty, and other evidences of bettering the human condition.

11.2.14                    Post-Millennialism was optimistically progressive. But it missed the judgmental element in Jesus' teaching when he warned that moral and political conditions would deteriorate prior to his return. Is the Kingdom really being brought in? Is the world really getting better? This view also muted the note of expectancy in regard to Christ's return.

11.2.15                    **Pre-Millennialism**

11.2.16                    Pre-Millennialism holds that the millennium is a literal period of one thousand years, that earthly conditions will worsen before it begins, and that Christ will return before the millennium to inaugurate the millennial Kingdom. It holds that the millennial Kingdom must be regarded as in some respects earthly as well as heavenly (spiritual).

11.2.17                    A number of the early Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus, were millenarians. In modern times traditional, broadly based millennial teaching has been challenged and largely eclipsed by the Dispensational form of Pre-Millennialism.

11.2.18                    There remain questions as to the form of divine intervention and control (including the binding of Satan), the nature of a kingdom state on earth and who will inhabit it, questions about God's renewed dealings with Israel as a people, and the Pre-Millennialist separation of the last judgment from the return of Christ.

11.2.19                    The strength of Pre-Millennialism has been its acceptance of Jesus' warnings as to the apocalyptic nature of the end times, its refusal to make the millennium a symbol of something other than literal years, the note of expectancy which infuses it, and that Christ himself not Church progress will inaugurate the millennial Kingdom.

11.2.20                    **Dispensationalism**

11.2.21                    This view, in its pre-tribulation rapture form, has largely encompassed traditional Pre-Millennialism and has been the single most important eschatological influence in American evangelicalism for over one hundred years. It is the point of view espoused by most Bible Schools and Colleges in America. A great deal of its influence is attributable to the popularity and widespread use of the *Scofield Reference Bible*.

11.2.22                    The Dispensationalist thesis is that God has been dealing with the world in terms of seven distinct dispensations (innocence, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, and the millennial kingdom), though many dispensationalists prefer to emphasize three: law, grace and the millennial kingdom. These are less specific time periods than eras, though admittedly they have specific time frames, during which divinely mandated human stewardship and responsibility are of a particular kind. The dispensations are seen to be progressive unfolding of God's governing and redemptive purposes. The modes of relationship between God and humanity in the dispensations comprise rules of life and government, not ways of salvation, though faith and obedience are generic to them all. In this respect all Christians hold to at least two dispensations, the Old and the New, but those who reject modern Dispensationalism tend to transfer the covenant promises made to Israel in the Old Testament to the Church and they usually interpret teaching about the Kingdom as having to do with salvation, not the establishment of an earthly Kingdom in a political sense. Like Pre-Millennialists, Dispensationalists believe that the millennium will begin with the return of Christ and his judgment of evil and will end with the advent of the eternal state which follows the final judgment. Dispensationalists insist on literal interpretation of certain (some allege 'selected') prophecies, whether concerning Israel, the Church or the millennium.

11.2.23                    A core thesis of Dispensationalism is that the Church must not be confused with the nation Israel and that God is not yet through with the nation Israel so far as his covenant relationship with her is concerned. In the Church ethnic distinctions disappear, but this does not abrogate the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament (in this respect, Post-Millennialists also believe that the promises to Israel do not automatically transfer to the Church). Rejection by Israel of Christ as Messiah at his first coming postpones the challenge to Israel, who will finally recognize him upon his return. Conditions on earth will worsen toward the end, but before the Great Tribulation the

Church will be raptured to meet Christ and will return with him to establish the millennial kingdom.

11.2.24 The millennial kingdom will be a literal one, i.e., political, social, economic, governmental, and will fulfill the glittering expectations of the Old Testament prophets. Satan will be bound, the earth will prosper, and the Lord Christ will be honored. But at the end of the millennial age Satan will be released and will again deceive the nations. Finally, he will be overthrown and judged along with the lost by Christ the Victor who will usher in the eternal state.

11.2.25 In the preceding and in what follows I do not attempt a detailed, referential study. Rather, I seek to epitomize dominant conservative perspectives and to isolate a number of key issues which must be settled if one is to develop a coherent eschatological perspective. One of the best studies of historical understanding and exegetical studies of the millennium and the seventy weeks of *Daniel* is that of Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days*, 1954. Other, more recent books from various perspectives include: Lorraine Boettner, *The Millennium*, 1957; G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*, 1972; J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Prophecy*, 1973; Robert H. Grundy, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 1974; George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 1974; R. G. Clouse, *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, 1977; Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 1983; Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze*, 1992; Ben Witherington, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World*, 1992.

### 11.3.0 **Issues that Remain: Ideology and Biblical Theology**

#### 11.3.1 **The Kingdom of God**

11.3.2 John the Baptist announced the Kingdom (*Matthew* 3:2) which message Jesus extended (*Matthew* 4:17). It was a warning of judgment and a call to repentance. In Jesus' teaching (a) the kingdom (as salvation) is present (*Matthew* 12:28; 13:11, 16-17), made evident by his teaching and miracles (*Matthew* 11:2-6) and (b) is a gradual development (*Mark* 4:26-32), and (c) is a future reality (*Matthew* 13:11, 16-17; 25:1). The difference between the proleptic sense of the kingdom as already present and spiritual, as against the kingdom as future in relation to promises made to Israel confused the disciples (*Acts* 1:4, 6).

11.3.3 Medieval thought, along with subsequent Protestant and Roman Catholic theology, espoused the doctrine of the two kingdoms, which paralleled Augustine's doctrine of the City of the World and the City of God. The earthly kingdom is ruled by men and women whose divine mandate is to maintain justice by punishing evil-doers. The spiritual kingdom employs the spiritual weapons of preaching, persuasion, prayer and good works. There developed as well the concept that Church and State may employ coercion to achieve their respective goals and that finally only God knows who the true Christians are.

11.3.4 To this can be added rejection of the Church-State kingdom ideal by those of the Believers Church tradition. They understood the nature of the kingdom in purely spiritual terms and argued for freedom within a religiously and socially plural society under civil law. Nevertheless, they too at times became coercive within their own closed communities, which some of them regarded as precursors of the coming earthly kingdom of Christ. Meanwhile, utopians envisioned a man-made kingdom - humanity's state of nature - which neatly paralleled the prophetic vision of the Bible.

11.3.5 The question is: is the kingdom of God both a present spiritual reality and an historical political reality in the future?

- 11.3.6 While the phrase 'kingdom of God' does not occur in the Old Testament, Pre-Millennialists, Post-Millennialists and Dispensationalists strongly object to the spiritualizing of the kingdom promises which they believe were made not only to Israel but to all humanity, and they object to the spiritualizing and transfer of prophecies which relate to Israel to the Church. On grounds of ordinary language use and common hermeneutical principles they see no reason for evacuating kingdom promises of their literal meaning - whatever one's view of the promises and their historical fulfillment may be.
- 11.3.7 No difference can be drawn between use of the phrases 'kingdom of God' and 'kingdom of heaven' (compare *Matthew* 4:17 with *Mark* 1:15; *Matthew* 13:11 with *Mark* 4:11 and *Luke* 8:10. Note G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 1986). The kingdom will embrace not only spiritual renewal but the renewal of the earth under Messiah's kingly reign and the healing not only of Israel but the nations as well (*Isaiah* 2:1-4; 11; 49). The final kingdom is in the future and is earthly (*Matthew* 8:11-12; 13:39-43; 25:31-34).
- 11.3.8 It is true that many evangelicals in this century failed to grasp the importance of the eschatological presence of the kingdom from the time of Jesus and the apostles (note my comments on Augustine's philosophy of history in this respect as being eschatological without being apocalyptic, 11.1.61). They tended to emphasize its future aspect almost entirely. Liberal Theology tended to emphasize the kingdom in the teaching of Jesus as imminent, accompanied by upheaval, with him as the Messiah, and thus to allege that he was mistaken, even misguided. Recent biblical studies have reached a consensus that both aspects are core elements of Jesus' teaching.
- 11.3.9 Kingdom theology must embrace Jesus' teaching about the kingdom in both respects: the spiritual kingdom which becomes manifest through the preaching of the Gospel, conversion and discipleship; and the future historical earthly dominion of Christ which he will establish upon his return. Christians of the Post-Millennial, Pre-Millennial and Dispensational schools of thought see the millennium as a part of that historical, earthly fulfillment and the precursor to the great mystery of eternity.
- 11.3.10 **Israel and the Church**
- 11.3.11 While all Christian theologians assume the difference between Israel and the Church, Reformed theologians in particular have been prone to transfer the covenant promises which were made to Israel to the Church. In this century the most vigorous opponents of this view have been the Dispensationalists, though maintaining the distinction has characterized the other millenarian perspectives as well. However they, the Post-Millennialists and the Pre-Millennialists, have been less apocalyptic when discussing events of the last times.
- 11.3.12 Dispensationalists insist that to identify the Church as the New Israel in such a way that the nation of Israel no longer figures in a special covenant relationship with God does violence to the meaning of the Old Testament covenant and to a reasonable reading of both Old Testament prophecy and the Apostle Paul's discussion in *Romans* 9-11 as well as themes in the book of *Revelation*. They insist upon a literal interpretation of the Old Testament promises to Israel and that these do not apply and cannot be applied to the church.
- 11.3.13 In the original 1907 edition of the *Scofield Reference Bible* edited by C. I. Scofield there is outlined the core of the argument, unchanged to this day, to keep Israel and the Church separate and to retain a literal, historical understanding of the Kingdom promises to Israel (the notation is at *Zechariah* 12:8, pp. 976-977, but the entire passage especially 12:8-10 should be noted).

- 11.3.14 The note refers to the house, lineage and kingdom of David. Brief reference is made first to God's dominion over the earth before the call of Abraham. There follows an outline of the nature and prophetic future of the theocracy of Israel.
- 11.3.15 Beyond the leadership of Moses and Joshua and Israel's rejection of the theocracy after the period of the Judges *the order of the development of the Divine Rule in Israel* focuses upon the Davidic lineage and Kingdom. This concept, viewed historically, prophetically and messianically is the heart of the Dispensationalist claim. I shall abstract only salient points and a few key references, chiefly those from Isaiah.
- 11.3.16 David is God's choice and the covenant with him includes a future Messianic Kingdom of the Davidic line in perpetuity known as the Throne of David (*2 Samuel* 7:8-16, note *Matthew* 1:6, 16-17).
- 11.3.17 The prophets understood it as an historical kingdom (*Isaiah* 1:25-26; 9:6-7; *Zechariah* 12:8-10). They describe it as: Davidic in the sense of being established by an heir of David; of heavenly origin and principle but set up on earth with Jerusalem as the capital (*Isaiah* 2:1-4); first over regathered Israel and then universal (*Isaiah* 11:1, 10-13); a kingdom of righteousness and peace (*Isaiah* 11:4, 6-9); a kingdom established not by persuasion but by God's power (*Isaiah* 9:7); a kingdom which entails the restoration of Israel (*Zechariah* 14:4); and a kingdom which fulfills the covenant promise to David which Israel's disobedience, captivity, dispersion and unbelief do not abrogate (*Psalms* 89:33-37; *Acts* 15:14-17).
- 11.3.18 The Dispensational view is that this Davidic Kingdom promise *enters the New Testament absolutely unchanged* (*Luke* 1:31-33 (note appended to *1 Corinthians* 15:24, p. 1226). It is wrong, it is argued, to confuse the fulfillment of this promise with the promise Christ made to build his church (*Matthew* 16:18), which is the additional, further disclosure of the divine purposes. Paul identified the nature and functions of the church as a mystery uniquely revealed to him (*Ephesians* 3:9-11). The reality of the church is contemporary and parallel with the mysteries of the present unfolding of the kingdom. The ultimate purpose of the re-establishment of the Davidic Kingdom under Christ is to restore God's sovereignty over the earth and the nations.
- 11.3.19 Paul deals with the historical place of Israel in *Romans* 9-11, not parenthetically in the midst of his discussion of salvation (1-8) and the practical discipleship which follows (12-16) but as integral to the whole salvation issue. God's rejection of Israel is not final, despite historical deviation which culminated in the rejection of Christ. God cannot break his own word (9:4; 11:29). All Israel will be saved (11:26). It is hard to see how all of these references can be transferred from Israel to the Church. The present, unbelieving generation does not inure against Israel's future response (11:31-32). Paul says nothing here about a different way of salvation, only that the covenant relation ensures God's faithfulness to call a different generation to faith in the one Christ. Nevertheless, as George Eldon Ladd has argued, while Pre-Millennialists concur that Israel will be saved, they are content to leave the details open. There are many examples of the New Testament re-interpreting Old Testament statements and prophecies in ways not present in the Old Testament texts. The church is indeed regarded as the spiritual Israel in passages such as *Romans* 9:25-26, in the spiritual posterity of Abraham (*Romans* 2:28-29; 4:11; *Galatians* 3:7), and in the reality and significance of the new covenant (*Jeremiah* 31:31-34; *Hebrews* 8:8-12).
- 11.3.20 It is a fact that during the past century Pre-Millennialists and Dispensationalists influenced British opinion toward re-establishing Palestine as a home for the Jews, though after World War II the British government tried by force to prevent the repatriation of Jews to Palestine. Critics of Dispensational theology and of some Pre-Millennial theology have charged that such activity has been self-serving and is not prophetic fulfillment and that the establishment of the State of Israel has no theological

significance. The destruction of six million Jews by the Nazi terror during World War II has led some to the view of a withholding of divine providence, though others have said that the Holocaust was the contemporary precipitant for the return of Jews to Palestine.

11.3.21

Nowadays, orthodox Reformed theologians maintain that covenants broken because of a generation's infidelity (*Jeremiah* 14:21; *Zechariah* 11:10) make claims to covenant relationship an empty letter of the law (while acknowledging that the conversion of Israel is a future possibility) and that the new covenant of the New Israel of God devolves upon the Church. The biblical basis for this argument is that Paul contrasts the *present Jerusalem* with *the Jerusalem from above* (*Galatians* 4:25-26) in a manner which displaces the former and spiritualizes the latter. Reformed scholars say that New Testament displacement of the repeated Tabernacle ritual by the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ dooms any thought of revival of the Old Testament Temple ritual (though the answer given by Dispensationalists is that the Tabernacle represents the displaced ritual rather than the yet-to-be-fulfilled Davidic Kingdom). The fate of the earthly Jerusalem is clearly enunciated in the four Synoptic Gospels and in John, Reformed scholars argue, and Jerusalem's fate is a judgment warning to all kingdoms and societies, which anticipates the final judgment. As well, Christian Zionism is seen to be inimical to the interests of true evangelism and to relations between Jewish and Palestinian Christians, the latter having suffered grievously because they are caught between two political forces and political ideals which are given a theological twist.

11.3.22

No developed eschatology can escape the theological and historical issue of the place of Israel in the providence of God and the end times. An important aspect of this is whether to view the millennial reign as an extension of Christ's Kingdom; that is, as an extension of his present heavenly reign in a more general earthly sense not merely to Israel or whether, as Dispensationalists claim, the millennial reign focuses upon restored and redeemed Israel and restoration of Temple worship, which concept faces serious problems in relation to the New Covenant displacing the Old.

11.3.23

### **The Return of Christ**

11.3.24

Is the second coming of Christ to be understood as personal and historical or symbolic, and if it is believed to be an historical event is it a one-stage event as has been traditionally thought in the history of the church, or a two-stage event as Dispensationalists believe (Christ's return for his church by means of the rapture of the believing dead and the church, followed by Christ's return with the resurrected believing dead and the church to inaugurate the millennium)?

11.3.25

Early Reformed faith in Christ's personal return and the restoration of the world under Christ's Kingdom reign to a significant degree has given way to the view that eschatology has been realized in the finality of Christ's redeeming work, to Barth's doctrine that eschatology is to be read not as new events to come but the playing out of the meaning of Christ salvifically, or to Moltmann's political, social and economic renewal as evidence of Christ's presence and earthly messianic kingdom.

11.3.26

In the New Testament the return of Christ is called the *Parousia*, which means Christ's coming, personal presence, or appearing (*1 Corinthians* 15:23; *1 Thessalonians* 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; *2 Peter* 1:16; 3:4, 12). The term 'second coming' is based upon *Hebrews* 9:28. Clearly the New Testament writers envision that return of Christ as personal, visible and triumphant. The theme of its imminence is not uncommon (*Mark* 9:1; *2 Peter* 3:1-10) though there are warnings that the time of the end is unknown (*Mark* 13:32).

11.3.27

Based on *1 Thessalonians* 4:13-18 most Pre-Millennialists and Dispensationists believe that Christ will return 'in the clouds' to raise saints who have died (the first resurrection) and with them take up living saints to meet him, and that later he will return

with his saints to establish his earthly millennial kingdom (which is linked with *Revelation* 12:10).

11.3.28 Traditional orthodox theology has taken the prophecies of Isaiah, Daniel and Zechariah seriously and has sought to correlate their meaning with Christ's words in the apocalyptic passages of *Mark* 13 and *Matthew* 24-25, with Paul's teaching in *1* and *2 Thessalonians*, and with the book of *Revelation*.

11.3.29 Common Christian understanding, though beset from time to time with millenarian speculation, was that Christ would return personally, hold court in the final judgment, separate the wheat from the tares (*Matthew* 13), consign the wicked to Hell and bring the redeemed into a heavenly state.

11.3.30 On the other hand Millennialists believe that a greater measure of detail about end times is discernible in the Scriptures (though not as detailed as Dispensationalists claim) and that Christ will reign in a temporal millennial kingdom during which Satan will be bound, before the final judgment. Such a broadly based millennial view is common in the early Church Fathers along with the note of the imminence of Christ's return.

11.3.31 Millennial theology declined after the Reformation but was revived in the nineteenth century with the rise of its dominant Dispensational form which, right up to the present, has heavily influenced modern evangelical thought in the United States, Canada and elsewhere.

11.3.32 On this view the end times are concerned primarily with the fulfillment of covenant promises to Israel and that the church will be taken out of the world during the climactic events connected with Israel's fate in the last apocalyptic days just prior to Christ's personal, visible return.

11.3.33 Thus a key question remains for Christian eschatology: is the return of Christ a single event, or does Paul speak of the rapture of the saints in *1 Thessalonians* 4:13-18 as prior to and an event separate from the second coming itself? While Paul's comments in this passage are not traceable to the recorded teaching of Jesus in *Matthew* 24-25 and *Mark* 13, he speaks authoritatively of Christ's return in the manner of a plenipotentiary whom the citizens of a community come out to meet and then accompany as he triumphantly enters the city. He then correlates the return of Christ with the Day of the Lord (the Day of final judgment, *1 Thessalonians* 5:1-10).

11.3.34 **The Millennium**

11.3.35 What is to be done with the text embedded in *Revelation* 20:1-7, *they came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years?*

11.3.36 I have already enumerated the main alternative interpretations of this passage: The fulfilled or realized A-Millennialism of Augustine. The millennium as the Spirit-empowered age of the church which prepares the way for Christ's return of the Post-Millennialists. The modern forms of the view of a literal millennium such as revived by J. A. Bengel (1687-1751) and advocated by contemporary Pre-Millennialists and Dispensationalists.

11.3.37 Realized Millennialism and Post-Millennialism are virtually indistinguishable. They yield the view common to contemporary Reformed theology that the millennium is a concept which should be understood symbolically in a manner consistent with the reading of apocalyptic literature, namely, that through the faithful ministries of the church the Gospel brings spiritual, social and economic blessings to the world following

which Christ will return personally and visibly to vanquish antichrist. The millennium represents the church age.

11.3.38 In the structure of *Revelation* the millennium represents the arrival of the long-expected kingdom in time (*Revelation* 20:4-6). G. R. Beasley-Murray adds, not only in time but also into eternity by correlating 21:1-5 with 20:4-6 (*New Bible Commentary*, Revised, 1970, p. 1304). Thus the millennium is integrally a part of the final kingdom in time and eternity. It is an odd fact that many Pre-Millennialists agree with most of what many A-Millennialists say, except for the critical issue of the interpretation of *Revelation* 20.

11.3.39 It is difficult in light of the continuous form of the narrative in *Revelation* 20-22 to make of the millennial kingdom anything but future and historical. The only exception I see is to make of it the seventh day of creation thus signifying the final 'rest' of God's people. But the concreteness and uninterrupted flow of the narrative is hard to escape. Satan's activity is on earth. It is hard to see that he is now bound. During the millennium he will be prevented from activity on earth by imprisonment. The kingdom is presented as earthly. The final attack by evil leading to Armageddon is on earth. Thus the question is not whether one can 'spiritualize' this concept or any other in the Bible (all hermeneutical systems do that where they feel it is mandated or appropriate), but whether a particular instance is in harmony with an over-all biblical hermeneutic.

11.3.40 The millennium is the time between the two resurrections (20:4-5) during which Satan is imprisoned. Christ inaugurates it upon his personal return. It forms the beginning part of Christ's eternal kingdom. Following the millennium comes the final confrontation with evil and the judgment of the lost. That is the time when Satan is finally cast into the lake of fire (20:15).

11.3.41 That the millennial kingdom in *Revelation* 20:1-5 is temporal appears to me to be clear. The doctrine can be rejected only on ideological but not on exegetical grounds. Nevertheless, Millennialists have often over-played their hand as to its nature and function in the end times. In the Gospels Jesus does not discuss the nature of the kingdom as the entré to the eternal order nor is there an explanation in *Revelation* of the millennial kingdom.

11.3.42 The theology of the millennial reign appears to be that what is now an invisible, spiritual reign of Christ will become visible and historical when the power of evil will be banished and God's purposes vindicated historically.

### 11.3.43 **The Seventy Weeks of Daniel**

11.3.44 The next critical issue to be settled in formulating a Christian eschatology is how to interpret the seventy weeks of *Daniel* 9:24-27. It is generally agreed that the seventy weeks mean seventy-sevens and represent seventy-sevens of years (so rendered in the RSV).

11.3.45 The modern A-Millennial view is that this prophecy was fulfilled in its entirety at the time of Christ, the final event being Titus' attack on Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 C.E. E. J. Young is representative of this view in his exposition of *Daniel* (*New Bible Commentary*, Revised, 1970, pp. 669-670). He understands the passage to be clearly messianic. The numbers are symbolic. He argues that the covenant entered into (v. 27) and the one who prevails in relation to the covenant is neither the perfidious Antiochus Euphianes nor a future Roman despot, but the Messiah. The seventieth week is fulfilled in the career of Messiah, Jesus Christ. Thus the seventy weeks represent the span needed to accomplish the messianic mission.

- 11.3.46 The interpretation of *Daniel* 9:24-27 decisively divides Pre-Millennialists and Dispensationalists from A-Millennialists. At issue is whether the seventieth week has been fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. or whether it is yet to be fulfilled in eschatological time.
- 11.3.47 Pre-Millennialists and Dispensationalists insist that the sense of the passage carries it into the last days. Those who object say that this puts two thousand years of church history between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of years.
- 11.3.48 There cannot be a more decisive divergence between the A-Millennial and the Pre-Millennial schools than the question of the identity of the person in 9:27, 'he shall make a strong covenant'. A-Millennialists interpret this of the Messiah, Pre-Millennialists of the Antichrist. They insist that grammatically the only antecedent to *he* is the evil one, the 'coming prince' of verse 26. *The many* are seen to be Israel. The desolator is the subject of the verbs and the picture is that of the desolation of worshipping Jews who have been in league with the evil one. The *full end* suggests the end of time, not only the period of the first century. Jesus interpreted this event as immediately preceding his own advent and as a sign of his advent (*Matthew* 24:13). Finally, the prophecy is set in the context of the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Thus the seventieth week of years appears to belong to the last phase of eschatological time, just before Christ's return. This coheres with the antichrist's breaking of the covenant in the midst of the seven year period (*Revelation* 11:2-3; 13:5) to command worship of himself in a counter-kingdom.
- 11.3.49 The final week appears to be a single complete unit, which the singular verb *is* suggests. What is involved in this climactic fulfillment? Six things: to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place (or one).
- 11.3.50 Connecting complete fulfillment of these things with the events surrounding Antiochus Epiphanes' devastation seems to be too great a load for that interpretation to bear. Nor is it convincing to think that all six have been fulfilled in Jesus' day up to and including the fall of Jerusalem. The passage is a 'wind-up'. The complete fulfillment awaits Christ's return and the final ending of Israel's idolatry and persecution. A major objection to this view is its alleged anomalous Jewish flavor, but this is an ideological bent.
- 11.3.51 **The Great Tribulation**
- 11.3.52 The Great Tribulation spoken of in *Revelation* 7:14 is not developed specifically as a doctrine in the Scriptures. It must be built up from scattered statements and allusions. A key passage is *Jeremiah* 30:7, 'the day of Jacob's troubles,' which are beyond Jeremiah's time - a time known by Daniel from Jeremiah (*Daniel* 2:1; 12:1-3). Jesus speaks of a coming tribulation (*Matthew* 24:21; *Mark* 13:19).
- 11.3.53 The *Daniel* passage fixes the tribulation in the end times. It is a time of tribulation for Israel. The passage in *Matthew* (24:15, 21-22) relates the tribulation to Daniel's prediction as does Paul by his use of the term Day of the Lord and reference to the man of lawlessness who claims divine status (*2 Thessalonians* 2:1-4). The beginning of the tribulation appears to be Antichrist's turning on Israel by divine permission (*Daniel* 7:25; *Revelation* 11:2-3).
- 11.3.54 In light of the foregoing one must decide whether the church passes through all or part of the Great Tribulation. On this Pre-Millennialists and Dispensationalists differ. Some of the former hold that the church will indeed, as been her lot historically, pass through the tribulation, but not to suffer the divine wrath. Does the tribulation concern

primarily Israel, or Israel and the church, and will it also constitute a period for the salvation of those who have come out of great tribulation (*Revelation 7:14*)?

11.3.55 **The Resurrection: One or Two?**

11.3.56 To suppose that the resurrection spoken of in *Revelation 20:4* is symbolic and that it means something other than the resurrection of the dead, but that the resurrection spoken of in *20:5* is indeed resurrection from the dead, is to attribute a level of confusion and ambiguity to the writer which is not credible.

11.3.57 The sentence *they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (20:4)* is the metaphysical and logical equivalent of *the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended (20:5)* These represent one kind of resurrection not two, but in the text they are separated by the millennium.

11.3.58 Thus the concept of the first and second resurrection is intimately joined to the question of the nature of the millennium and the conjunction is critical to millennial faith. Those who make the prior commitment that the millennium is symbolic are virtually bound to make the first resurrection symbolic, and some even make the second symbolic also.

11.3.59 Will this do in relation to both what the text says and what it means? Clearly the answer impacts eschatological theory considerably.

11.3.60 In *John 5:29* Jesus speaks of a resurrection to life and a resurrection to judgment, but he does not divide these. In light of this the Christian church has traditionally held to a general resurrection followed by the judgment which separates the saved from the lost (note also *Acts 23:6; 24:15*).

11.3.61 In order to conserve the presumed paradigm of a general resurrection, interpreters have resorted to one of several symbolic interpretations of the first resurrection of *Revelation 20:4*:

11.3.62 First, that it symbolizes conversion or quickening to spiritual life from the deadness of sin. In *John 5:25-29* Jesus speaks of both spiritual and physical resurrection in the same context.

11.3.63 Second, that it symbolizes baptism because in *Romans 6:4* baptism is a metaphor for death and resurrection.

11.3.64 Third, in respect to both of the foregoing, that it refers to the culmination of life spiritually when the soul leaves the body to reign with Christ in heaven, not on earth.

11.3.65 This is ingenious but unconvincing, as difficult as it is because a real first resurrection exacerbates the problem of what to do with a millennium in which there are evidently resurrected saints and also those in the millennial kingdom who have not tasted death. That is the point, at least for me, at which Dispensational speculation goes too far.

11.3.66 In *20:5* when the writer says *this is the first resurrection* he means those who lived and reigned with Christ (*20:4*). The term *anastasis* here clearly means literal resurrection from the dead (this is so of all uses in the New Testament except for the metaphoric use in *Luke 2:34*) and is thus not a symbol of conversion or spiritual quickening.

11.3.67 Further, the verb (*ezesan*) translated *they came to life (20:4)* is used in the New Testament in connection with resurrection (including Christ's resurrection, *Revelation 2:8*) not in connection with the soul surviving the body. I agree that the New Testament

does use resurrection as a symbol of new spiritual life, and that the verb *ezesan* could be used in that respect, but in this case it is not, nor is it used in a purely spiritual sense in the remaining New Testament uses.

11.3.68 Are there hints of this elsewhere? Some see hints in what appear to be stages in Paul's comments in *1 Corinthians* 15:23-26, namely: first, the resurrection of Christ; second, the return of Christ and the resurrection of the saints; third, the final stage when the lost are raised to judgment. But the time-frame of these is not stated by Paul.

11.3.69 These data convince me that we can deconstruct the literalness of neither the first resurrection nor of the millennium. I understand the text to say that those who are raised will share the millennial reign. It is thus very difficult to escape the conclusion of a real first resurrection and a literal millennium.

### 11.3.70 **Final Judgment**

11.3.71 Should a distinction be drawn between the Judgment Seat of Christ (the *bema*, *2 Corinthians* 5:20) and the Great White Throne judgment (*Revelation* 20:11-12)? This distinction regards the first as exclusively concerned with the stewardship not the salvation of Christians and the latter with the judgment and banishment of the lost not the possibility of their salvation. The difficulty with this is that Paul also uses the phrase *judgment seat of God* (*Romans* 14:10).

11.3.72 Thus the common view of most Christians historically has been that while judgment does occur in this life, the final judgment is still future; Christ will be the judge; it will occur at Christ's second coming; humans will be judged for their deeds and the light they have had; and, the final destiny of the saved and lost will be determined.

11.3.73 Most Christians will agree with this outline; nevertheless, the reality of the first resurrection before the millennium and the second resurrection after the millennium raises questions as to whether the judgment of the just and the unjust straddle the millennial period. On this view judgment is a process which is historical and episodic, recurring and particular (such as the judgment of Christian stewardship, *2 Corinthians* 5:10; the judgment of the nations at the end time, *Matthew* 25; and the judgment of the angels, *Jude* 6, *2 Peter* 2:4) as well as final (*Revelation* 20:11-12).

11.3.74 The concept of a general resurrection and a final judgment common to both saved and unsaved is consistent with both A-Millennial and Post-Millennial teaching except that the latter tends to be more optimistic about the course of history toward the end of the age.

11.3.75 Pre-Millennialists hold that at Christ's coming only the saints will be raised and will be judged for their faithfulness (*1 Corinthians* 3:12-15). but that at the end of the millennium the resurrection and judgment of the wicked will take place. The saved do not appear to be present at the final judgment of *Revelation* 20:11-12. This view harbors considerable difficulty especially as regards those who will populate the earth during the millennium. The difficulties appear to be mitigated if the seventieth week of Daniel is still future. This view thus holds that Christ will return with his raised and glorified saints, he will judge wicked humanity and Antichrist and bind Satan, he will reign for the millennium period and, at the end of the millennium, there will occur the final Great White Throne judgment.

11.3.76 It is difficult to escape the conclusion that *Revelation* 19-20 states the reality of a future millennium which is inaugurated by the resurrection of the saints and their reign with Christ, and is ended by the final contest with and removal of evil when the wicked are judged at the last judgment. This is thought by some to parallel the eschatology of *Isaiah* 24:12-23.

11.3.77 For many moderns the concept of a final tribunal, or of a first tribunal to judge the works done in the body by Christians (*1 Corinthians* 3:12-15) and a second tribunal to judge the lost according to their works (*Romans* 2:6; *Revelation* 20:12, 22:12) has lost its awe. Despite this, the seriousness with which final judgment is taken in the teaching of Jesus (*Matthew* 16:27) and throughout the Scriptures is inescapable.

#### 11.3.78 **Eschatology and Mood**

11.3.79 Absorption with the details of eschatological times can become an obsession and can lead to predictions being made, or inferences which amount to predictions, which prove to be wrong. I attest to having heard many of these during my lifetime. That they prove to be wrong is not the main reason not to be obsessed with eschatological detail, which is that the focus of New Testament eschatology is for purposes of comfort not nerve-wracking speculation and that apocalyptic absorption tends to abstract individuals and leaders away from society and the main tasks of the church.

11.3.80 Pre-Millennialism, toward which I am disposed, has tended to foster a negative frame of mind about society because it is taught that 'the world is going to hell in a hand-basket' and that we must withdraw from the world and that, in any case, anything we do socially or otherwise is to no point. Unquestionably, the call to conversion is eschatological - it is the call to new, resurrection life now; nevertheless, it is not a call to apocalypticism, but to patient, even suffering, service. To the extent that eschatology compels a seriousness about life and one's stewardship in view of the judgment seat of Christ it is an important intellectual component of Christian understanding and a vital spiritual datum which should foster an open view of history and hope as the anchor of the soul.

#### 11.4.0 **The Christian Hope and Christ's Return**

11.4.1 If it is the case that the millennium spoken of in *Revelation* 20 must be taken to be an historical period, and if in relation to it a first and a second resurrection will occur, then some form of Pre-Millennial understanding of the events associated with Christ's promised return appears to be indicated by the biblical data. All forms of understanding involve some spiritualizing and existential interpretation. For all interpreters the question remains one of principles of exegesis and exposition. In my case, I remain unconvinced that in its context the millennium can be made symbolic.

11.4.2 Recurring speculation about Christ's return, which sometimes develops into frenzy, does not often translate into the spiritual crisis which results in the life of faith, hope and love. It is now widely accepted that the New Testament kerugma has an eschatological thrust which must be distinguished from the apocalypticism of the first century. Paul's eschatology in *1* and *2 Thessalonians* is intended as an antidote to a form of apocalypticism which was disturbing faith and emotional balance, and was distorting the meaning of expectancy. Moral transformation and hope are the key features of New Testament eschatology.

11.4.3 The Christian hope embraces more than moral and spiritual values such as the experienced spiritual reality of C. H. Dodd's concept of a realized eschatology, or Rudolf Bultmann's concept of the eschaton being renewed in the faith of generation after generation of converts. Nor is it merely an extension of the post-resurrection exuberance of the first Christians. The Christian hope concerns events which are historical in the sense that they not only embrace the existential, experienced reality of the Gospel, but also point to a series of events prophetically which mark the end of the age and are associated with Christ's return.

- 11.4.4 Nor is Christ's return merely symbolic of a new world order, which concept translates the existential realities of the kerugma into political, economic and social reality. Undoubtedly a kingdom age is envisioned, but that kingdom is associated with Christ *in the context of his return*. The political, economic and social transformation which such a kingdom may involve are not in themselves the return of Christ, as Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann seem to suggest. These changes are characteristics of the kingdom which Christ himself installs upon his return. That is the meaning of *parousia*. The cause comes before the effect.
- 11.4.5 The incarnation of Christ, his teaching and miracles, his death and resurrection are indeed signs of the kingdom, along with the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost and the quickening of new life in Christian converts from that generation to this. In that sense the eschaton has arrived. But there is a future fulfillment on a world scale which will transpire at the appearing of Christ; thus, the two aspects of the kingdom, initial and final, are associated with the two 'appearings' of Christ (*Hebrews* 9:26, 28; note *Acts* 3:21). The second coming will be as visible as the first, but it will be in glory not humility (*Matthew* 24:30; 25:31). It will be personal (*Matthew* 26:64; *Acts* 1:11; 3:21-21), and it will be unpredicted, unforeseen, and astonishing (*Matthew* 24:32-44, hence the injunction *watch therefore*, v. 42; 25:13; *1 Thessalonians* 5:2, 6).
- 11.4.6 We are, as George Eldon Ladd has written, between the times of the eschaton; between the first part which concerns the historical redemptive act of Jesus Christ and the last part which will be the historic kingdom. Both are freighted with spiritual significance but both are concretely historical. They are part of the final, eschatological, redemptive act which has both come to pass and will yet be fulfilled (*Hebrews* 1:2; *Mark* 10:30). That future kingdom which Christ will establish will confirm and extend his act of redemption and triumph. During the 'till he come' period, Christians who die, die in the Lord. Upon death they are with Christ (*Luke* 23:43; *2 Corinthians* 5:8; *Philippians* 1:23).
- 11.4.7 Toward the time of his return, Christ said that there would occur a culmination of evil which would be focused in an anti-Christ power. The 'desolating abomination' (*Matthew* 24:15), also identified as the lawless one (*2 Thessalonians* 2:3) and the beast (*Revelation* 13:5, 16-17) who will captivate the world, demand total religious commitment to himself, and will dominate the world politically and economically.
- 11.4.8 The tribulation which the Johannine writer describes in *Revelation* 12 appears to refer both to the church which suffers throughout her history and to the final climactic surge of evil.
- 11.4.9 Christ himself will intervene in these events. He will destroy the evil one (*2 Thessalonians* 2:8) upon his personal arrival (*parousia*, *1 Corinthians* 15:23-24), at the revelation of his power and glory (*apokalupsis*, *2 Thessalonians* 1:7), at his appearing (*epiphaneia*, *2 Thessalonians* 2:7-12; *1 Timothy* 6:14).
- 11.4.10 This constitutes the great comfort for Christians (*Titus* 2:13). Upon his return the dead in Christ shall rise first (*1 Thessalonians* 4:16-18), a promise which is grounded in the fact of Christ's own resurrection (*1 Corinthians* 15:20). Then Christ will establish his theocratic reign on earth, the millennial kingdom, which will fulfill the redemptive work already present in the hearts of his people (*1 Corinthians* 15:24-28).
- 11.4.11 In the book of Revelation this kingdom is placed between the first and the second resurrection (20:4, 5). The release of Satan after the millennium and his renewed deceiving of the world suggest that no amount of social reconstruction can change the human heart apart from regeneration. The second resurrection is followed by the final judgment (*Revelation* 20:5, 11-15) when those whose names are not found in the book of life will be judged. Those who are in Christ are spared this judgment (*John* 5:24). God's

righteousness in grace and judgment are finally vindicated by Christ's triumph and in the new heavens and new earth (*Revelation 21:1-4*).

## 11.5.0 **Death and Resurrection**

### 11.5.1 **The Meaning of Death**

11.5.2 A striking feature of modern life - some would say of the post-Christian world - is its attitude to death as a natural phenomenon, to be accepted in a spirit of resignation, but about which it is best not even to think let alone talk. American Naturalism has ever sought to be classically hedonist, comfortable and cheerful, with little of the *angst* generated by European nihilism and pessimism. There is no soul. What exists is a functioning body. Death is final. Therefore enjoy the positive reinforcements of life while you may. But there is no point in fearing death, and certainly not of fearing a mythical future judgment. Modern discussions of value concern social decorum, law and order, and whether there are justifiable limits to personal freedom, but questions about any fundamental distinction between right and wrong, moral responsibility, and post-death moral accountability are no longer part of the modern exchange of ideas.

11.5.3 Modern American attitudes to death replicate Epicurus' advice to Menoeceus: *Become accustomed to the belief that death is nothing to us*. It is not the death that is painful but the anticipation of it. If there is no spiritual self which continues to exist then *nothing to us* has dramatic metaphysical significance which matches the terms of modern dialogue. Epicurus concludes:

11.5.4 *So death, the most terrifying of ills, is nothing to us, since so long as we exist, death is not with us; but when death comes, then we do not exist. It does not then concern either the living or the dead, since for the former it is not, and the latter are no more.*

11.5.5 Blessedness in life, says Epicurus, depends solely upon learning what to choose and what to avoid for the health of the body and to keep the soul free from disturbance. This is the golden text of contemporary American naturalistic hedonism.

11.5.6 The mystical tradition has little appeal for moderns except as a haunting memory of unconvincing speculation about life after death and the occasional jolt that reports of post-death experiences make (I am skeptical of these). Is the soul immortal? Is there an existence beyond discrete personhood in space and time? Or, is the life to come a release from time-bound bodily existence, as Plato and other Idealists have suggested, and absorption into impersonal infinity?

11.5.7 Biblical teaching suggests to some an inherent tension between understanding death as part of the natural order and death as the moral issue of sin. On the natural order side the argument is that but for death the planet would quickly be inundated by forms of life such as insects. On the moral side, biblical teaching indicates that while death may be regarded now as intrinsic to human nature (argued from texts such as *John 12:24*; *1 Corinthians 15:36*; and *1 Timothy 6:16*), a different transition to the next life was probably divinely intended and that death as we know it has penal overtones (*Genesis 2:17*; *Romans 5:12, 17*; *6:23*). Death is the last enemy (*1 Corinthians 15:26, 55*). Even death which is considered to be altruistic submission for a cause reflects horror of it and of its judgmental aspect (*John 15:13*; *Philippians 2:17*; *2 Timothy 4:6*). Karl Barth wrote that death is a sign of God's judgment and is executed as we die (CD 3.2.47.5 p.596). Its inevitability overshadows and dominates our lives. Death, he adds, is never an angel of light; is never our brother.

11.5.8 The meaning of death in Christian teaching focuses upon the metaphysical reality of persons within a creationist perspective. God is understood to be personal and to have created human beings for fellowship with himself. It is of the essence of

Christian teaching that personal identity be conserved both in this life and in the next, but in both cases in a bodily life.

- 11.5.9                    Thus views which see life under divine reign as restricted to historical existence, or as part of a process which is moving toward trans-personal reality or absorption in infinity, or that simply deny the possibility of future self-conscious existence are unacceptable. To this may be added an instinctive revulsion from the idea that the 'other side' is populated by ghostly apparitions. Whatever that life is, it must be a form of bodily life for that is the only way discrete personal existence is described in the Scriptures (*1 Corinthians* 15:35-38). The focus of resurrection in the New Testament is upon regeneration and renewal of both body and spirit, not merely resuscitation of mortal remains.
- 11.5.10                    The doctrine of Hades, which appears to imply an intermediate shadowy existence raises difficult questions. Biblical data include Samuel who made a 'ghostly' appearance (*1 Samuel* 28:13-14), the condition of the rich man (*Luke* 16:19) and the spirits in prison (*1 Peter* 3:19-20). The continuity of personal identity is clear as is the implication of bodily life. Paul is adamant that being 'unclothed' (disembodied) is an undesirable state; rather, one is 'further clothed' (*2 Corinthians* 5:4). That such a transition is regarded by some as the resurrection is firmly rejected by Paul in *1 Corinthians* 15, as we shall see.
- 11.5.11                    Karl Barth's teaching on death is maddeningly ambiguous. On the one side his powerful Christocentricity led him toward a form of double predestination in which Christ is both reprobate and the elect for all of humanity, but at the same time he appears to decline identification with universalists. His doctrine of the future, shadowy life is unclear, and may point to annihilation of the lost. A search for an understanding of death haunts his writings in a manner which is typical of central European absorption with death (CD 3.2.#47).
- 11.5.12                    In life we are terrified of the possibility of limitation, he says. Death is the termination of human life: *one day our life will be no more* (p. 594). Death means no more capacity for movement (are these ghostly shades?). Death is inevitable and is the sign of God's judgment of us (p. 596, 600-601). But God is the limit of our death and in Jesus death is behind us. Thus, for Barth the concept or threat of death is dealt with in the Cross but not the physical reality. Finitude means mortality. Man as such has no beyond (p. 632). The life to come is in God, and while unspecific as to one's personal identity Barth is hauntingly reluctant to give up the idea, as his letters to friends in times of bereavement show (*Letters 1961-1968*, trnsl. G. Bromiley, 1981).
- 11.5.13                    For Barth, resurrection does not mean continuation of life but life's completion (*Dogmatics In Outline*, transl. G. T. Thomson, 1949, p. 154). He is quite specific in this exposition of the Apostle's Creed that the Christian hope is about neither life after death nor an event apart from death. He appears to say at times that the life in God is of another dimension not necessarily bodily and discrete as this life has been. Nevertheless, personal pronouns concerning that life pervade his discussion.
- 11.5.14                    Resurrection is the complementary side of forgiveness (attested to in the baptismal act of being buried with Christ and of rising again to new life) which presupposes death. Does this mean that resurrection takes place at death; that it is an entering upon the life to come? Resurrection is a passage from the eternal life that began here to the life beyond. Resurrection of the flesh (i.e., the whole man) means neither immortality nor resurrection of the body alone, but an unveiling of the unity of our life with Christ's from the cradle into eternity. Resurrection is the complete disclosure of our life (*The Faith of the Church*, transl. Gabriel Vahanian, 1958, p. 162, 166). He thought not of last *things* but of *last* things, that the end of all things is grounded in Christ (*Karl Barth*, Eberhard Busch, trnsl. John Bowden, 1975, p. 149).

- 11.5.15 In classical Christian Theology physical death and spiritual death are both seen to be a separation: of the soul from the body in the case of the former, and of the soul from God in the case of the latter. Apart from redeeming grace, the exclusionary force of God's holiness is inherent in the sting of death (*2 Thessalonians* 1:9).
- 11.5.16 Modern society has groped toward a legal definition of death once radical procedures for keeping bodies in a persistent vegetative state became possible. For Christians human life entails more than body functions. Personal existence is only conceivable when the brain allows the possibility of consciousness, hence spontaneously breathing vegetative states are now widely regarded as the equivalent of death as in the case of brain-dead persons.
- 11.5.17 **Resurrection**
- 11.5.18 Resurrection in the New Testament should not be confused with or confined to resuscitation or re-animation as in the case of Lazarus, who presumably died later in life. In the New Testament *we shall be changed* corresponds to the *spiritual body* (*1 Corinthians* 15:44, 52), the mortality which will be swallowed up by life (*2 Corinthians* 5:4).
- 11.5.19 In the Old Testament there are three stories of rescue from deaths that had occurred: the son of the widow of Zarephath (*1 Kings* 17:17-24) raised by Elijah, the Shunammite woman's son (*2 Kings* 4:8-37 raised by Elisha, and the reviving of the man being hastily buried whose body touched the bones of Elisha (*2 Kings* 13:20-21). Inferences concerning the life to come or passage into the next life include: *Job* 14:14; 19:25-27; *Psalms* 17:15; 73:24-25; and *Psalms* 139:7-12 which, along with *Isaiah* 66:24, *Jeremiah* 31:30 and *Ezekiel* 18 introduce the concept of direct personal responsibility in this life and the next.
- 11.5.20 Two key passages in the Old Testament are specific as to resurrection, namely, *Isaiah* 26:19 and *Daniel* 12:2-3. The latter reads:
- 11.5.21 *And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.*
- 11.5.22 Jesus' encounter with the Sadducees directly concerned their denial of the resurrection (*Matthew* 22:23-34, *Mark* 12:18, *Luke* 20:27), which Paul uses to his advantage by exploiting the issue which divided the Sadducees and the Pharisees (*Acts* 23:6-10).
- 11.5.23 The core of Jesus' teaching is that God is *not God of the dead, but of the living*. Denial of the resurrection involves error as to the teaching of the Scriptures as well as about the power of God (*Mark* 12:24-27). To this can be added his statements about his own resurrection and power in glory (*Matthew* 19:28, 24:30, 25:31, 10:33), along with parallel passages in *Mark* and *Luke*.
- 11.5.24 This truth is apparent through a wide range of Jesus' direct statements, inferences, and actions: The parables of the tares and of the net (*Matthew* 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50 - verse 43 resonates with *Daniel* 12:3). The last judgment (*Matthew* 25:31-46). The accusing men of Nineveh at the last judgment (*Matthew* 12:41, *Luke* 11:32). His power to raise the dead (*Matthew* 11:4-6, *Luke* 7:22-23). The raising of Jairus' child (*Mark* 5:22, 41; *Luke* 8:42, 54), the widow of Nain's son (*Luke* 7:11-17), and Lazarus (*John* 11).

11.5.25 Rational belief in life after death (as against the possibility of the resurrection of the body) has concentrated on two issues:

11.5.26 First, as Plato conceived it, the inner rational or spiritual principle of human life has the character of being able to transcend and survive temporal and finite existence. This spirituality is evident in human capacity to devote oneself to moral and transcendental ideals. Finite existence is thus propaedeutic and developmental in relation to a final coherence which will abstract what is worth conserving from the failures and ambiguities of finite existence.

11.5.27 Second, and parallel to the foregoing, is the view that it makes nonsense of existence (the key element of nihilism?) to suppose that after long development toward coherent spiritual life it should be extinguished at the point of likely fulfillment. This is particularly attractive to those who understand God to be inherent in the cosmic process and that the process is teleological. In that regard, reinterpretation of the resurrection of Christ moves toward the concept of fulfillment in us of a resurrection style of life or frame of mind which the concept of his resurrection symbolizes.

11.5.28 Three questions are critical: Is resurrection more than life after death? Was Christ's resurrection historical in the sense of having been a reportable event? Will the resurrection of those who are Christ's be like his?

#### 11.5.29 **The Resurrection of Christ**

11.5.30 Christian belief in the resurrection of the dead as a central tenet of faith, which is stated in the Apostles' Creed, is grounded in the fact of Christ's resurrection. The fact of Christ's resurrection and the character of it are foundational to Christian hope. Paul declares that if Jesus Christ is not raised from the dead then preaching and faith are in vain (*1 Corinthians* 15:14). In the New Testament, Christ's resurrection is not merely existence-oriented, it is event-oriented. Christ's resurrection ensures the bodily resurrection of those who are in Christ (*1 Corinthians* 6:14, 15:23). In what sense is Christ's resurrection the pattern or prototype of the resurrection of believers?

11.5.31 Descriptions of the events in the Synoptic Gospels vary and are difficult to harmonize though the conclusions are clear.

11.5.32 *Mark* 16 records that the stone was rolled away, the statement of the young man who was sitting in the tomb, and that the women remained astonished and silent. Regrettably, the original ending of *Mark* (after verse 8) appears to have been lost. Some details in the present ending appear not to cohere with earlier statements, for example, the report of Mary Magdalene (16:10) as against the silence of 16:8.

11.5.33 *Matthew* 28 records that the two Marys came to the tomb, the earthquake, the angel who rolled away the stone and his appearance, the reaction of the guards and the meeting in Galilee. His account seems to extend detail from where Mark leaves off at 16:8.

11.5.34 *Luke* 24 records that those who came to the tomb (women who are unnamed until verse 10?) found the stone rolled away, and the story of the two whom Jesus met on the road to Emmaus. Luke's account is a more didactic recalling of Jesus' words and begins the process of interpreting the resurrection, which he extends in Acts.

11.5.35 There appear to be three main emphases in the Synoptic accounts: the visit of the women to the grave which they found empty, the meeting with Jesus in Galilee, and the appearance of Jesus to the disciples in Jerusalem. This has suggested to some scholars a three-fold early tradition regarding the resurrection: Galilean, Jerusalemite and Pauline.

- 11.5.36 In *John* the presence of Christ and the promise of his resurrection abrogate death (*John* 10:17-38; 5:21, 26) of which the raising of Lazarus is the central symbol. Christ is the resurrection and the life (11:25). John records the encounter with Mary Magdalene and, in the context of the Galilean meeting with his disciples, the challenge to Peter that thenceforth his assignment from the risen Christ is to tend the sheep. The Johannine presentation joins Christ the life-giver with Christ the propitiation for sin (*I John* 1:1-2; 2:2).
- 11.5.37 A harmony of the accounts is not inconceivable, but is difficult. More important are the two key foci of all the accounts, which complement each other: **the empty tomb** and **the appearances**. These are presented as solidly embedded in space and time. They are not phantasmal or mere vision; rather, they concern reportable events.
- 11.5.38 Paul claims to have seen the risen Christ (*I Corinthians* 15:8, 9:1). The resurrection is central to his theology. Christ is Lord of both the living and the dead (*Romans* 14:9). He is the exalted Lord (*Philippians* 2:9) who is at the right hand of God (*Romans* 8:34, *Ephesians* 1:20, *Colossians* 3:1) in the heavenly places (*2 Corinthians* 12:2, *Ephesians* 1:3) over whom death has no more dominion (*Romans* 6:9). Christ, as the second Adam, the last Man, inaugurates the new humanity and the new age by the power of an indestructible life (*I Corinthians* 15:45, *Hebrews* 7:16).
- 11.5.39 Theologically, the resurrection of Christ focuses the entire meaning of the Incarnation and Work of Christ in a single reality and symbol as the vindication of God's saving purposes and the hinge of history.
- 11.5.40 What is the nature of this event? In the New Testament narrative it is clearly embedded in history and is stated to be historical. Jesus actually died. His body was laid in the tomb. The disciples were distraught and were ready to disband. They were certain that all they had banked on during the previous three years was lost. But the empty tomb and the appearances of Christ to them changed all that. There is at bottom a harmony as well as consistency of narrative in the several accounts. The event is reported factually and interpreted, but it is not explained.
- 11.5.41 S. H. Hooke (*The Resurrection of Christ*, 1967, p. 130) concludes that as a metaphysical issue it cannot be explained by natural causes or verified empirically (though the historical record should be accepted in the same way other history is recorded and accepted):
- 11.5.42 *...we may say that the resurrection of Jesus is a transaction which took place between the Father and the Son, unlimited by time, incapable of being witnessed by an human witness, and therefore incapable of historical verification.*
- 11.5.43 For Hooke, the Transfiguration prefigured the resurrection. But he shies away from any *mere event* character of the resurrection, though he movingly accepts the reality of the empty tomb and that the power of the new eternal life *transformed the body which Joseph laid in the grave on the dark evening of that Friday into the immortal form untrammelled by the limits of time and space, which it was henceforth to bear* (p. 131). Hopefully in this statement we are not left with withdrawing from historical affirmation in the interests of affirming eternal reality. Hooke then retreats to spiritualizing (as most of us inevitably do): what the disciples saw was not an object of sense-perception *but a Person, Presence ...* (p. 142). But it is precisely the empirical side which Jesus stressed when he challenged Thomas and the others, *Put your finger here, and see my hands (John 20:26-29)*. The seeing is tactile. The believing concerns not merely an event to faith but an event in time and space which, as authentically recounted, becomes the foundation for faith in others.

- 11.5.44 In an effort to resolve difficulties inherent in the relation of Christ's resurrection body to ours, Leonard Hodgson has proposed that believers will rise *in* Christ but not *like* Christ (*For Faith and Freedom*, Vol. 2, 1957, p.197):
- 11.5.45 *We express the belief that Christ's body underwent some process other than is the destiny of our own, a process of which the nature is completely mysterious to us but which resulted in there being a more direct connection between his earthly body and his resurrection body than we can expect for ourselves.*
- 11.5.46 This concept in principle grapples with the different kinds of body about which Paul speaks (physical and spiritual, *I Corinthians* 15:46). Discrete human existence entails bodily life Hodgson is saying, but the bodily resurrection will be in a different, higher mode of reality.
- 11.5.47 One of the few evangelical New Testament scholars who attempts to probe the metaphysical questions implicit in the biblical data is Murray J. Harris (*Raised Immortal*, 1983; *Easter in Durham: Bishop Jenkins and the Resurrection of Jesus*, 1985; *From Grave to Glory*, 1990). The following is my summary of his conclusions:
- 11.5.48 First, Christ's resurrection body was no longer bound by material or spatial limitations. It appears to have been able, as we would say, to function in more than one dimension. *Matthew* 28:2, 6 suggest that he passed through a sealed tomb, and *John* 20:19, 26 through closed doors. The latter texts, along with *Luke* 24:15, 29, 30 (*Jesus stood among them*) suggest arrival without physical movement. Yet he walked, conversed, stayed and ate among them.
- 11.5.49 Second, for the most part his appearances are mentioned but not his disappearances, as in *Luke* 24:31. Harris suggests that this points to an essential state of invisibility and therefore of immateriality. The verb *ophthe* means visible or came into visibility in nine occurrences (*Luke* 24:34; *Acts* 9:17, 13:31, 26:16; *I Corinthians* 15:5-8; *I Timothy* 3:16). When placed alongside *Luke* 24:44 (*while I was with you*) their specific, itemized nature indicates that during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension he was generally not visible to human eyes, nor did he regularly stay and eat with them (which *Acts* 10:41 and 1:4 do not demand, except as episodic).
- 11.5.50 Third, a corollary of the preceding is the ability of Christ in his resurrection body to materialize and be localized at will. That which was essentially immaterial became tangible. He could be seen by human eyes, his wounds seen, his body touched (*Matthew* 28:9; *Luke* 24:39-40; *John* 20:20, 27, 29; *Acts* 1:9). The verb to see (*idete, see my hands and my feet*) means to comprehend or grasp by touching and points to the empirical nature of the encounter. His eating of food was evidently for reasons of proof of his reality to his disciples (*Acts* 10:41). There is nevertheless an abjuring against mere physical contact (*John* 20:17), apparently reinforced by the radiant glory of the resurrection body which suggests essential detachment from earthbound existence. One may note the Eastern Orthodox Church custom of celebrating the transition of the soul from its wandering to its heavenly home on the fortieth day after death as a striking allusion.
- 11.5.51 Fourth, the relation between the state of Christ's body before the resurrection and his mode of existence after the resurrection points to the transcending of the laws of nature as we know them. Personal identity remains intact (*Mark* 16:6; *Luke* 24:39). That which was laid in the grave is risen. Yet they did not always recognize him. Why? We do not know. Perhaps because under the conditions of ordinary experience following his death, which they had witnessed, he could not be expected to be present and they, on the other hand, were overwhelmed by sadness and disoriented as to their next step.

- 11.5.52 Harris concludes that Christ's resurrection body is no mere re-animation but is entrance upon a spiritual mode of existence; the existence which Paul identifies as necessitating a *spiritual body*. Christ's reality was not spirit in the sense of being phantasmal, but of a transformed body, a deathless state (*Romans* 6:9). His resurrection body is a form of corporeality in which the spirit is supreme, unfettered by space and time. In these respects, it was metaphysically different from the raisings from the dead, such as that of Lazarus.
- 11.5.53 **The Resurrection of the Dead**
- 11.5.54 Two key Pauline passages focus on the reality of the resurrection and the nature of the resurrection body: *1 Corinthians* 15 and *2 Corinthians* 4:16 - 5:10.
- 11.5.55 In *1 Corinthians* 15 Paul responds to either the denial or the re-definition of the meaning of resurrection at one or more of several levels (15:12, 16). These possibly embrace the following errors: First, that resurrection is an impossible concept because, as the Epicureans argue, the soul dissolves with the body (what is to rise?, 15:35); or, as the Platonists argued, it is an inconceivable concept because the body wastes away and only the soul is immortal. On the other side, there appear to have been those who announced a realized resurrection: either that the kingdom has already been fulfilled (*Philippians* 3:12) or that the resurrection is a thing of the past having occurred at baptism as the sign of one's having risen with Christ (*Romans* 6:4-5).
- 11.5.56 Paul counters denial and deconstruction by affirming that the resurrection will yet occur in the future and is certain (15:22), that it is based on the historical facticity and reality of Christ's resurrection (15:23), and that it will be bodily (15:38). Thus Paul affirms the somatic character of the certain future resurrection.
- 11.5.57 The form of Paul's argument is two-fold: 'that-ness' and 'how-ness.'
- 11.5.58 'That-ness' concerns facticity (15:1-11), which point is made by stating that something is the case (*hoti*, 15:4, 12). Christ has risen. The Christian's faith and the point of all Christian endeavor depend upon the reality of Christ's resurrection (15:29-34) and the certainty that the dead in Christ will rise (15:12-28).
- 11.5.59 'How-ness' follows from the rhetorical question (*pos*) in 15:35. Paul discusses the nature of the resurrection body in 15:35-50. The answer to 'how?' is that God gives an appropriate body. The answer to 'what?' is that the body will be appropriate to its environment. In 15:51-57 he says that those who are alive at Christ's return will be 'changed' (transformed) in a manner similar to those who have already died (15:51).
- 11.5.60 The resurrection body entails transformation: Negatively put, *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable* (15:50). Positively put, *we shall all be changed* (15:51). It is embodiment, but of a different form (15:36-41). The difference is shown in the contrast between Adam (a physical body, 15:42, 45) and Christ (a spiritual body, 15:44, 45). The latter statement raises the critical issue as to whether the resurrection body will be like that of Christ's.
- 11.5.61 To the rhetorical question *How can the dead be raised? With what kind of body?* (15:35), Paul replies: death is one step toward life, an analogy of which is the death of the seed as the step to (and way by which one enters upon?) new life. God gives to the seed planted (body which dies) the body he has prepared which lives (15:38).
- 11.5.62 Bodies vary according to the functions they fulfill for different conditions and the environments they are designed for (15:39-40). This diversity and adaptation are created by God. Thus it is not irrational to think of a resurrection body as well as an earthly body. There can be more than one kind of body, says Paul. Differences in the

natural order furnish an insight as to the differences between a physical and a spiritual body in the resurrection; namely, that which is perishable as against the imperishable (15:48). Thus Adam and Christ head two differing kinds of existence and metaphysics: the perishable and the imperishable. Paul's argument seems to imply that we shall not only arise in Christ but like Christ in the sense that the resurrection body will be spiritual as Christ's was.

11.5.63 In **2 Corinthians 4:16 - 5:10**, Paul repeats his emphasis upon the indestructibility of the inner spiritual reality versus the transience of the empirical order (4:16-18). Things in sight are temporary.

11.5.64 What then of the body? What follows is not unambiguous, in part because Paul switches metaphors and the grammar is notoriously difficult to grasp. I'm not at all certain that I have fully grasped Paul's meaning.

11.5.65 To begin with (5:1), he compares the earthly body to a terrestrial house as the spirit's residence, tent-like, frail and impermanent, with a house not made with hands, derived from God, which is strong and permanent. It may be that the term *oikodome* here should be rendered *structure*, not in the sense of something that has earthly physical mass (two other occurrences could in this sense be parallel, *1 Corinthians* 3:9 and *Ephesians* 2:21), but is nevertheless a body. For Paul, disembodiment is an abhorrent idea (5:3).

11.5.66 Paul then switches from a tent or dwelling to clothing (5:4b-5). We are not willing, he says, to take off this clothing but would rather put other clothing on so that the mortal may be consumed by life; or, should that be understood as *absorbed into life*? That is, not to be dissipated or merely dissolved into the elements, but be transformed into the glory of the immortal body. He concludes that to be at home in this body we are away from the Lord, but that we would rather break off from the body and be at home with the Lord (the aorist tense suggests a quitting, or breaking off, a 'fleeing the coop,' from one to the other).

11.5.67 This passage is notoriously difficult to interpret.

11.5.68 The contrast in verse 1 is clear: the desirability of a well-built, permanent structure as against the earthly, transient tent. When Paul says *we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*, does he mean that a better structure already exists in the heavens, which R. V. G. Tasker suggests are the many dwelling-places of *John* 14:2 (Commentary on *2 Corinthians*, 1958, p. 78)? Does such an understanding undermine Paul's insistence that the resurrection is still future? Or, is Paul saying that in the interval between death and the resurrection there is a body prepared in the heavens to move into?

11.5.69 In verses 2 and 4, the only places in the New Testament where Paul uses the double compound *ependusasthai* (to put on over), Paul appears to say that he longed to put on the resurrection body over his earthly body as an additional garment, i.e., to be alive at the time of Christ's return, but the final meaning may be that he simply longs for the permanent body which has been prepared, eternal in the heavens. He thus has in mind the transition which apparently inevitable death will bring rather than the possibility of Christ's return during his lifetime.

11.5.70 Paul is reinforcing the conviction that in any event a heavenly garment or shelter awaits immediately upon death, even though those who are alive at the time of Christ's return will be translated. The result will be the same, except for the passage of death. Spiritual embodiment will be extraordinarily better than the present earthly state. New vestment, life, transformation, new corporeality all belong together. Passage at death is beyond the limitations of space and time, perhaps with no consciousness of 'from this to that.'

11.5.71 The presence of the Holy Spirit in believers is the portent and guarantee of that immortality to come (5:5). Thus the Christian looks neither for riddance of the body nor for pre-death translation, but for the translation which coincides with death. The dying Christian passes into being *further clothed* and *at home with the Lord*.

### 11.5.72 **The Resurrection Body: Spiritual Corporeality**

11.5.73 Concerning the terms employed by the apostolic writers in the Gospels about Christ's resurrection and by Paul and expositors of Paul about the resurrection body of believers, I note the following:

11.5.74 1. Transformation, evident in the reported invisibility and immateriality of Christ's body, yet his appearances and localization (*ophthe*).

11.5.75 2. Christ's appearances represent an incursion from a spiritual, invisible world.

11.5.76 3. The resurrection of Christ entails for Christians a spiritual mode of existence at their own resurrection (*1 Corinthians* 15:45), that of pure spirit, or life-giving spirit.

11.5.77 4. Spiritual body means corporeity under control of the Spirit (Murray J. Harris), a spiritualizing of matter (Leonard Hodgson), a materializing of spirit (Donald Bloesch). Words fail us. Definitions become circular. This suggests a form of corporeality in which spirit is supreme (corporeality controlled by the spirit), i.e., a heavenly form of embodiment.

11.5.78 5. The resurrection means that the heavenly life will be a spiritual corporeality in which personal identity is conserved and is recognizable. Jesus said, *It is I, be not afraid*. Paul declares (*2 Corinthians* 5:6-10),

*So we are always of good courage;  
we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord,  
for we walk by faith, not by sight.  
We are of good courage,  
and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.  
So, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.*

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,  
so that each one may receive good or evil,  
according to what he has done in the body.*

### 11.6.0 **The Life to Come**

#### 11.6.1 **Final Judgment**

11.6.2 *Revelation* 20:11 presents a melancholy scene. Before the Great White Throne are brought the *rest of the dead* (20:5) who had not risen with the redeemed, great and small, to be *judged by what they had done*, as recorded, and that those not found in another book, the Book of Life, are cast into the Lake of Fire.

11.6.3 Jesus Christ, the loving redeemer has become the fearsome judge from whose presence all flee but cannot hide (20:11). Sometimes God the Father is identified as the final judge (*Romans* 2:1-11, 14:10; *Hebrews* 12:23) and sometimes Jesus Christ himself (*Acts* 10:42, *2 Corinthians* 5:10, *2 Timothy* 4:8).

- 11.6.4 Judgment will be in terms of the righteousness of God (*Genesis* 18:25; *Romans* 3:3-4) to disclose why their names are not in the Book of Life and why they should be banished from God's presence.
- 11.6.5 Judged by what they had done refers to works (*Romans* 2:1-11). These have spurned the light God placed in their hearts and minds (*Romans* 1:20), rejected truth (*Romans* 2:8), and chose wickedness, whether they lived under the revealed law of God in the Old Testament or not (*Romans* 2:12). Greater light entails greater responsibility.
- 11.6.6 But the future judgment is already in place now (*John* 3:18) from which the believer in Christ may pass into the assurance of life (*John* 5:24). That acquittal has already taken place (*Romans* 5:1, 8:33-34, *1 John* 4:17) means that those who are in Christ have no fear of the final judgment.
- 11.6.7 The strongest case made against final judgment is the universalist appeal, either that it is ungodlike and a contravention of God's love which is, finally, irresistible and will accomplish its purpose, or that by election and decree Christ the elect brings all of humanity with him, as Karl Barth seems to imply. Nevertheless, as much as one might feel attracted to the universalist appeal it cannot be sustained from the teachings of Christ nor from other parts of the Scriptures.
- 11.6.8 Universal love is said to best represent the essential nature of God. So declared Hastings Rashdall early in this century as one of the most prominent exponents of the Love of God view which became a pillar of Liberal Theology. Judgment, he said, reflects our primitive instinct for revenge, not the nature of God and to judge except as a means to good is itself an evil.
- 11.6.9 Exponents of this view had already in a prior way assumed that Hell was a passé concept, not fit for moderns to consider. The list of those who opted for divine love as radical love ending in universalism is long. Six key texts were used to reinforce the biblical form of the argument: *John* 12:32, *Acts* 3:21, *Romans* 5:18, *1 Corinthians* 15:22-28, *Ephesians* 1:10, and *Philippians* 2:9-11. God's universal benevolence was invoked (*1 Timothy* 2:4, *2 Peter* 3:9). The cosmic scope of Christ's redeeming work was called upon to reinforce universalist doctrine (*2 Corinthians* 5:19, *Colossians* 1:20, *Titus* 2:11, *Hebrews* 2:9, *1 John* 2:2).
- 11.6.10 Nevertheless, beyond the judgment many of these texts imply and the fact that the cosmic saving worth of Christ's work states a benevolent reality upon which is grounded a universal and beseeching offer which may be rejected, is the stark warning and contrast of the two paths (*Matthew* 7:13-14, 25:46; *Hebrews* 2:3; *Romans* 2:7-8; *2 Thessalonians* 1:6-9, *2 Peter* 2:9, 3:9).
- 11.6.11 Universalism based on the doctrine of the love of God fails to take account of that love as holy love, and that in creating freedom God gave to humans the power to say 'no' to him and to suffer the consequences. The central question remains: can one say no to God?
- 11.6.12 The new universalism appears, as someone has said, to doom all humanity to salvation, that all are elect in Jesus Christ and pre-determined to salvation. God's grace is irresistible, said Ethelbert Stauffer. All humanity is included in Jesus Christ the primal man. Christ is both the reprobate and the elect. A reconciliation has been achieved, it is being offered for appropriation by faith, but in the end God will be glorified in his sovereign grace to save all. The final decision is God's not man's. Christ has already suffered the damnation; there is no more to suffer. No limit can be placed upon God's illimitable and invincible grace.

- 11.6.13 The difficulty with this doctrine is that it cannot cope with Jesus' teaching on the two paths, nor with the reality of the freedom to say no along with the responsibility which follows for the decision.
- 11.6.14 Nor is a doctrine of conditional immortality, of the annihilation of that which is not salvable, consistent with the scope of biblical teaching. This concept, such as advocated by Leonard Hodgson, argues that God will preserve only that which is worth preserving and will annihilate the rest, or that apart from divine providence and grace it will fade away into non-existence.
- 11.6.15 Finally, there is not found in the Scriptures warrant for a doctrine of purgatory, probation, second chance, or of retribution which at the end is remedial, which Emil Brunner called a pedagogic cleansing process, a judicial suffering which leads to repentance.
- 11.6.16 I have previously set forward a rationale for the punishment of evil (7.13.9-19) as the means by which God maintains the standards of his own righteousness without inhibiting the freedom of vocation he has given to human beings. Freedom and punishment are correlatives.
- 11.6.17 This is the frame of reference into which one must put the awful doctrine of Hell. The terms are many: the darkness (*Matthew* 8:12, 25:30), eternal fire (*Matthew* 25:41;), eternal punishment (*Matthew* 25:46), the day of wrath (*Romans* 2:5), eternal destruction and exclusion (*2 Thessalonians* 1:9), the pit or abyss (*Revelation* 9:2, 11), the second death (*Revelation* 2:11, 21:8), the lake of fire (*Revelation* 20:15).
- 11.6.18 What condition is this? Is it not only absence of all good as many suggest but, as well, unredeemable dislike of good, as C. S. Lewis has suggested in the Screwtape Letters? Is it misery of banishment from God's presence and comfortless remorse? Is it total self-centeredness, isolation and a-sympathy and, therefore, the hell of egocentric spiritual torment? Or, as Paul Althus has suggested, is it inescapable Godlessness wrapped up in an inescapable memory of a rejected God-relationship?
- 11.6.19 In the Scriptures Hell is a place as well as a condition. The Old Testament term *Sheol* and the New Testament term *Hades* (the Septuagintal equivalent for *Sheol*) suggest an intermediate state (*Luke* 16:23, *Revelation* 20:13-14) which, along with Satan will be destroyed once Gehenna becomes the destiny of the lost (the Lake of Fire, *Revelation* 20:14-15, note also *Matthew* 5:29-30, 23:33).
- 11.6.20 The sin is fixed and the guilt is endless (*Revelation* 22:11). Biblical teaching speaks not of eternal damnation for fleeting sin, but of God's dealing with a set condition of radical, irredeemable evil. Punishment confirms the abiding nature of the kind of world God purposed to create - that of grace, freedom and responsibility. The terms for everlasting or eternal punishment (*aion*, *aionos*) contextually refer to that which is unending; for example, in regard to the nature of God (*Romans* 16:26, *1 Timothy* 1:17). Other Scriptures exclude hope (*Matthew* 12:31-32, *Mark* 9:43, 48). To deny that eternity does not mean endlessness (e.g., that it means *in eternity*) is to play with the words of Scripture, whatever one may think of that concept. The terms *aion* and *aionos* cannot mean anything less than eternal.
- 11.6.21 Scrutiny and judgment are inescapable. To ignore punishment cheapens morality and the holiness of God. Only the fearfulness of final judgment can account for the sense of crisis which pervades Paul's preaching and that of other New Testament evangelists. Judgment is an impetus to evangelism. It creates an enormous pressure upon the Christian conscience to preach the Gospel (*2 Corinthians* 2:14-17, 4:1-6, 5:11-15). In the words of the Puritan theologian Richard Baxter, we are to preach *as dying men to dying men*.

- 11.6.22 Human destiny rests finally with the love and holiness of God. Only he can - and he will - decide the levels of responsibility entailed in human response to his revelation or failure to worship and serve the Creator who has revealed himself in nature and conscience (*Acts* 10:34-35; *Romans* 1:18-20; 2:5-11, 15-16).
- 11.6.23 **Present with the Lord**
- 11.6.24 The concept of heaven in the Scriptures is related more to being in the presence of God than to being in a specific place within the final Kingdom designated by that name. This is where the souls of the redeemed go upon death, awaiting the resurrection and the resurrection body.
- 11.6.25 Fundamental to all of the stirring descriptions of heaven is the concept of a renewed heaven and earth (*Isaiah* 65:17; 66:22; *Romans* 8:21-22; *2 Peter* 3:13; *Revelation* 21:1, 5). Descriptions are many and varied: A Messianic banquet, *Matthew* 8:11. A new world, *Matthew* 19:28. A secure city, *Hebrews* 11:10. A homeland, *Hebrews* 11:14. An ideal, unshakable Kingdom, *Hebrews* 12:22-24, 28. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb, *Revelation* 19:9.
- 11.6.26 These descriptions relate to a central theme of the Scriptures: that the final Kingdom is restoration of all things to God through Christ who had originally created them and reconciles them through the blood of his Cross (*Colossians* 1:16, 20). Christ will subdue every enemy, including death, and then hand the Kingdom, restored and glorified, to the Father (*1 Corinthians* 15:24-28). Thus the final Kingdom embraces not only the spiritual reconciliation of redeemed humanity but, as well, the physical restoration of a world injured by sin and evil.
- 11.6.27 Commentators have noted that humanity was placed originally in a garden, but that the final state is a city, the City of God (*Hebrews* 12:22, *Revelation* 21:2, 10). Why? The idealization of the New Jerusalem represents the new heavens and new earth. In view is humanity redeemed and the environment restored, a new world whose light is the presence of God himself (*Revelation* 21:5, 23).
- 11.6.28 Of what do the Scriptures speak when Paul refers to the things that God has prepared for those who love him (*1 Corinthians* 2:9)? There follow some of the biblical notations and pictures:
- 11.6.29 A prepared place with Christ, *John* 14:2-3.
- 11.6.30 Eternal life, *Matthew* 25:46; the new creation, *2 Corinthians* 5:17.
- 11.6.31 Holiness, *Revelation* 21:27.
- 11.6.32 Freedom from death, sorrow, suffering and sin, *Revelation* 21:4.
- 11.6.33 Songs of Redemption, *Revelation* 14:3.
- 11.6.34 An eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, *2 Corinthians* 4:17.
- 11.6.35 Mutual recognition and fullness of knowledge, *1 Corinthians* 13:8-12.
- 11.6.36 Service and worship, *Revelation* 19:1; 7:14; 22:3.
- 11.6.37 Inseparable communion with God: *Romans* 8:38-39; *Revelation* 21:3-5.
- 11.6.38 The communion of saints, *Hebrews* 12:23.

11.6.39

Beyond these there are many other beautiful symbols and representations in *Revelation*: The tree of life in the paradise of God, 2:7. The crown of life, 2:10. The gifts of manna, the white stone and the new name, 2:17; 19:8. The morning star to those who suffered, 2:28. The white garments and the fine linen, 3:5. Becoming pillars in the temple of God, 3:12. A share in the Messianic reign, 3:21. All fear and want removed, 7:15-17. And, the final vision of the river of the water of life, 22:1-5.

11.6.40

Heaven is the dwelling place of God and of the redeemed. Contemplation of that final Sabbath Rest (*Hebrews* 4:1) strengthens faith and teaches patience. It is the vision which generates hope, illumines understanding and stimulates faithful ministry. The apostle Paul says,

*So we do not lose heart.  
Though our outer nature is wasting away,  
our inner nature is being renewed every day.  
For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us  
an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,  
because we look not to the things that are seen  
but to the things that are unseen;  
for the things that are seen are transient,  
but the things that are unseen are eternal.*