

DAY Christian Theology II
BTH 302 Course Pack
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SLCC

PROLEGOMENA: Introductory Matters

The Study of Systematic Theology

Definitions

For the purposes of this class, the term systematic will be typically utilized so as to embrace a potentially more holistic understanding of that which is being studied. For the purview of this class is not exclusively what the New Testament teaches, but rather incorporates the whole of Holy Scripture. And while we are viewing the Scripture through the lense of New Covenant understanding, the term systematic is preferred over Christian simply because the former speaks methodologically, while the latter speaks pre-suppositionally.

This is to say, the phrase “Christian Theology”, says more about the a-priori, or pre-suppositional stances out of which we will operate, than it does of the actual method of our study.

The phrase ‘Systematic Theology’ specifically identifies the method of our approach. The fact that we are Christians, interpreting and approaching Sacred Writ from the framework of the New Covenant is assumed.

Systematic Theology is descriptive then, of that systematized and holistic study which has as its purpose the determination of what the Biblical teaching is on the major subjects of Holy Scripture.

This presupposes a specific methodological approach :

(1st) identifying and interpreting the relevant passages in the Bible on specific topics and (2nd) summarizing the conclusions reached in a manner that is in harmony with and under the authority of the Scripture itself.

But what is the value or advantage of Systematic Theology over simple Bible knowledge. How is doctrine and theology related? Cottrell suggests that the term “doctrine” refers to the whole scope of Biblical teaching, which may be sub-divided into two categories of theology and ethics.

Theology focuses on what we are to believe; what is true.

2 Timothy 4:3 says, *“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions...”*

Titus 2:1 *“But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.”*

Theology then deals with one's belief structure.

Ethics, on the other hand, focuses on what we are to do; what is right.

For example, Titus 1:9,10 says that *"the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine."* What is this but a description of proper behavior?

There are then two all inclusive categories, theology and ethics; right beliefs and right behavior. Both fit under the one umbrella of Doctrine.

The traditional and broad listing of the major Doctrines of systematic theology is as follows:

Doctrine of the Word of God	(Bibliology)
Doctrine of God	(Theology)
Doctrine of Angels	(Angelology)
Doctrine of Man	(Anthropology)
Doctrine of Christ	(Christology)
Doctrine of the Holy Spirit	(Pneumatology)
Doctrine of Redemption	(Soteriology)
Doctrine of the Church	(Ecclesiology)
Doctrine of the Future	(Eschatology)

Systematic Theologizing is the Command of Holy Scripture

All Christians are exhorted to *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* (2 Timothy 2:15; KJV)

Ponder the importance of sound doctrine from the Apostle John's warning. *"Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son"* (2 John 1:9; ESV) *Again from the KJV, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."*

What is the *"teaching of Christ"*, the *"doctrine of Christ"*, but that category of systematic theology called Christology. Observe that here implicitly stated is the prime importance of systematically theologizing about the Biblical teaching concerning Christ; His Person and His Work.

Systematic Theologizing is the example of Christ and the Apostles

Ponder the implication of Paul's words, *"What does the Scripture say?"* in both Romans 4:3 & Galatians 4:30. This same "systematic" approach is clearly implied in the account of Christ walking with the two on the road to Emmaus.

Jesus, "*beginning with Moses and all the Prophets...interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*" A few verses later Christ said, "*These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled... Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."* (Luke 24:27, 44-47; ESV)

Observe that Jesus was "identifying and interpreting the relevant passages in the Bible on specific topics and then summarizing the conclusions reached in a manner" that would both harmonize with and be under the authority of the God-breathed Holy Scripture which "*cannot be broken*" (John 10:35).

In other words, Jesus was "doing" systematic theology with the disciples.

Systematic Theology is necessary for grounding in truth

Doctrinal error is no less prevalent in our day than in the early centuries. Consider the First Council of Nicea (A.D. 325).

Vitally important was that Council for the Doctrine of Christ; Christology. But how important is this doctrine today?

Do believers today understand the Christological error, even heresy, involved in Mormonism or Jehovah Witness teaching, to use just two examples?

To simply trust in one's tradition and/or superficial Bible reading and teaching, without seeking to plumb the depths of Scriptural wisdom and doctrine, leaves one poorly equipped for the multitudinous "*winds of doctrine*" that blow in every generation. (Ephesians 4:14)

Systematic Theology is the product of a sound epistemology and theology

A sound theology embraces the Biblical teaching on the omniscience of the only wise God. 1 John 3:20 tells us that God "*knows everything*". Romans 16:27 praises "*the only wise God*".

To embrace these two concepts is to assume certain things about the revelation God has given in Holy Writ. There should be the anticipation of truth without error, of orderliness and a logical progression of ideas that has internal cohesion, that is it does not logically refute or contradict itself, being the product of an only wise and omniscient (all-knowing) God.

This theological understanding then, affects our approach to the pages of Holy Scripture. We anticipate orderliness, logic, rational thought that builds upon itself and does not contradict. We therefore anticipate being able to categorize and systematize teachings which are on similar topics. And when we have done this we have been engaged in Systematic Theologizing.

Necessary heart postures for a study of Systematic Theology

We should study systematic theology with prayer and therequest for wisdom.

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law." (Psalm 119:18)

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting." (James 1:5, 6)

We should study systematic theology with humility of heart

"Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5)

"But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word." (Isaiah 66:2)

"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." (1 Corinthians 8:1)

"Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith." (Habakkuk 2:4)

We should study systematic theology with sound reason

"Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods?' If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—do you say..." (John 10:31-38)

"Have you never read in the Scriptures?" (Matthew 21:42)

Jesus constantly reasoned with the Jews, on the basis of what the Holy Scripture said. He was a student of the Bible, able to extrapolate from the Sacred Text and make immediate application.

We should study systematic theology in the context of accountability to others who are further down the road of sound doctrine

"What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2)

"Command and teach these things...Practice these things, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." (1 Timothy 4:11-16)

It is expected there will be “faithful men” who will teach within the church. As they have a stewardship to teach, so those taught have a stewardship to listen, learn, gain, deepen and grow.

We should study systematic theology allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture

To learn what the Bible has to say on a given topic, we must have in front of us all those passages that speak to the subject at hand. This requires careful study. “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself,” the *Westminster Confession* reminds us, “and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”

We should study systematic theology amidst rejoicing and praise

“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes...” (Psalm 19:7-8)

“Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.” (Psalm 119:97)

The Apostle Paul, at the conclusion of deep doctrinal teaching breaks forth exclaiming... *“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”* (Romans 11:33-36)

“O Lord, deepen our love for and hunger for the sacred writings, which are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

1 GOD'S SELF REVELATION

1.1. God is Incomprehensible yet Knowable

“The Christian Church confesses on the one hand that God is the Incomprehensible One, but also on the other hand, that He can be known and that knowledge of Him is an absolute requisite unto salvation.” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.29)

“Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.” (Psalm 147:5)

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” (Romans 11:33)

“Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know?” (Zophar in Job 11:7-8)

“And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.” (Romans 1:19)

1.2. Self-Revelation by God is required for all knowledge of God

1.2.1. Berkhof quotes Abraham Kuyper, Dutch Calvinist Theologian, who says, “In the study of all other sciences man places himself above the object of his investigation and actively elicits from it his knowledge by whatever method may seem most appropriate, but in theology he does not stand above but rather under the object of his knowledge.” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.34)

1.2.2. Ponder the chasm between God and man

Eternal	temporal
Creator	creature
Infinite	finite
Omnipotent	limited power
Omniscient	limited knowledge
Omnipresent	limited space & mobility
Uncreated	created
Uncaused Cause	effect

With the Fall, man's inner being was “subjected to corruption” with devastating consequences in all of man's existence.

Relationally with God...	alienated & fearful
Relationally with Eve...	duplicitous & blaming
Psychologically...	shame & guilt
Morally...	disobedient, self-centered & deceitful
In relation to Justice...	doomed
The Created realm...	shattered...“subjected to corruption”
In relation to Truth...	suppresses Truth (Romans 1)

1.2.3. Mankind’s Fallen Epistemological Consciousness may be described in four parts:

Fallen Man is the ultimate judge; not God.

Fallen Man denies God and any Divine influence.

Fallen Man believes his thought to be absolutely original with regard to the cosmos or himself. His thoughts come out of himself exclusively.

Fallen Man confronts the facts of the cosmos around him as the product of time plus chance. They are merely brute facts... ultimately irrational.

So not only is there the Creator-creature distinction, the infinite difference between the eternal infinity of the Divine Mind and man’s finite understanding, there is also the problem of sin and the Fallen state of mankind.

Sin brings about a futility of thought as the sinner becomes darkened and foolish in his thoughts.

The epistle of Roman describes this condition... *“they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools...”* (Romans 1:21,22)

Therefore, Self-Revelation is necessary from the standpoint of Who God is because of His transcendent nature; wholly above and beyond us and our thoughts.

Self-Revelation is also necessary from the standpoint of man because of our fallen nature.

Traditionally, God’s revelation to man has been categorized into two parts: General and Special Revelation.

1.3. God’s General Revelation to all mankind

The Bible testifies there is a general revelation of the Creator in the very cosmos itself.

This general revelation is called general in the sense that it is given to all on a universal nature and communicates only general knowledge about God. None may escape feeling the full force, sufficient to His purposes, of that revelation.

General Revelation is that made available to all mankind on the basis of what is seen in the created realm. Calvin called this the *divinitatissensum*, or "awareness of divinity" residing in all people

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard." (Psalms 19:1-3)

"For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse." (Romans 1:19,20)

"For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them." (Romans 2:14,15)

A further delineation was made by the Reformers between Mediate General Revelation and Immediate General Revelation.

Mediate General Revelation is that revelation made by God through the medium of the physical realm external to us. Specifically Scripture says that the created realm declares the glory or character of God, proclaiming His handiwork.

Immediate General Revelation is that revelation made by God through the moral law internal to us. Specifically Scripture declares that His law is written on our hearts giving us, in the words of C.S. Lewis, an inner sense of "oughtness".

Immanuel Kant, German philosopher and last major thinker of the Enlightenment, said there were two things that kept him in awe. "The starry hosts above and the moral law within". Here Kant was describing Mediate & Immediate General Revelation.

Consider the flow of the *God-breathed* thought of Romans 1...

Despite the universal knowledge of God's eternal power and divine nature, man suppresses that very knowledge of the Creator.

For example, consider Bertrand Russell, 20th century philosopher and atheist, who when asked what he would say to God if he found himself before Him, answered: "I should reproach him for not giving us enough evidence."

But observe the clear teaching of Romans one. It is not that people refuse to allow the clear revelation of God in nature into their heads; quite the contrary, the revelation does

indeed get through. The basis of the indictment is that while the people know God, they still do *“not honor him as God or give thanks to him”* (Rom. 1:21)...

The problem is that knowledge, as a category, is continually distorted and suppressed, as truth is exchanged for a lie (vv.21-32).

R.C. Sproul gives a brilliant analysis at this point saying, "Not only does God act objectively through his creation, which produces a general revelation of himself, this revelation goes on to produce a natural theology that serves as the basis for the universal guilt of all mankind."

So the real question is not "What will happen to the poor innocent people in the wilderness who never hear the gospel?" The real question is, "How many innocent people are out there in the wilderness?" Scripture says there are none.

This then is the net effect of God's General Revelation of Himself to mankind: Guilt! Certainty that there is a God in heaven, who is all-powerful, coupled with strong internal evidence based on the inescapable reality of the inner sense of *oughtness* that we do not keep, that this God is also both Lawgiver and Judge.

Clearly, mankind left with only General Revelation would have been doomed.

1.4. God's Special Revelation

Here is understood a specific point in time and space where God supernaturally intersected the Cosmos with knowledge about Himself; knowledge not automatically bestowed upon all mankind. *“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets...”* (Hebrews 1:1)

Special Revelation has been given mankind by God in three primary ways; three categories. The supernatural acts of God in the created realm, the spoken &/or written words of God, and the personal presence of God in the created realm.

First, consider that God has given revelation about Himself in deeds or acts. The entire exodus event was one supernatural act followed by another. God's response to Elijah's prayer is yet another example.

Second, consider that God has given revelation about Himself in words. This is to say that God has chosen to reveal knowledge about Himself in propositional truth statements; statements purporting to contain truth in the form of propositional statements, that is, a declarative sentence stating something that can be either true or false.

This second form of verbal revelation was at times in dreams, through angels, carved in stone, written on walls, thundered from atop mountains, spoken through human servants...

Third, consider that God has given revelation about Himself through His personal visible presence. This has taken two forms: God's presence in the form of a *theophany*, clothing Himself with the form, typically, of a creature.

Think of God's walking with Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen 3:8).

Think also of the nonhuman form of the pillar of fire (Exodus 13&19), or the Spirit of God descending in the form of a dove upon Jesus.

The second form of God's visible presence is the incarnation, when God became flesh. Here indeed, as Cottrell points out, is a mode of revelation that differs qualitatively from all other modes, in that the incarnation "is not so much a mode of divine communication as He is the divine being Himself!" (p.48)

Dr. Cottrell wisely sounds a caution at this point. The primary purpose of the incarnation was not revelatory, but redemptive. Christ Jesus came to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15) through the propitiatory blood sacrifice of Himself on the cursed cross (Romans 3:24, 25).

1.4.1. The Crucial Nature of God's Word Revelation in Holy Scripture

Paul reminds Timothy that "*from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...*" (2 Timothy 3:15,16)

Able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Surely here is that portion of Divine Revelation so very necessary to mankind's plight.

Fascinating how Psalm 19 depicts the contrast between General Revelation and Special Revelation as it found expression in Holy Scripture.

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. 2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. 4 Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, 5 which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. 6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. 12 Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from

hidden faults. 13 Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.”

Observe Cottrell’s warning that here “lies one of the most serious points of separation between conservative and liberal theology: Whereas the former affirms word revelation, it is characteristic of the latter to deny it.” (p.48)

1.4.2. The Problem of Liberal Theology with Word Revelation

It is alleged by liberal theology that there is an unbridgeable chasm between God and man.

As Cottrell says, “The main reason for denying word revelation is the assumption that God’s transcendence – the qualitative difference between the Creator and his creatures – makes it impossible for him to express divine truth in finite human language. The finite cannot contain the infinite; relative history cannot contain absolute truth.” (p.48)

The element of truth that this error embraces is strongly taught throughout Scripture. Namely that God is Creator and is transcendent to the created realm. Ecclesiastes 5 exhorts us to “remember that He is God in heaven and you are upon the earth.”

The question before us is whether or not the Scriptures teach a complete unbridgeable chasm between God and man.

To boil down the Biblical teaching, the answer is yes there is an unbridgeable chasm from mankind’s perspective. But no, there is not an unbridgeable chasm from the Creator God’s perspective.

However, from ancient times mankind has wrestled with truth and error in this direction. The question as it was framed may be stated in this way: *‘What is the one basic element out of which has come all the diversity in the universe?’* Ravi Zacharias summarizes this saying, “the quest for the philosopher has been to find unity in diversity.”

Ravi goes on to show how “Atheistic evolutionary theory is hard pressed to explain how the diversity that exists could ever have come about from the unity of primordial slime.” (ibid., p.148) Plato and Aristotle framed this as the tension between the Universal, and the Particulars.

<p>UNIVERSALS... which give meaning to the particulars</p> <hr/>
<p>PARTICULARS... including each of us as a person</p>

German Philosopher Immanuel Kant, (1724-1804), alleged watershed thinker of the Enlightenment, took this concept and set forth a complete chasm in this realm, between what he called the *noumenal* and the *phenomenal*. By *noumenal* he meant the realm of meaning and value. By *phenomenal* he meant the physical realm around us that can be measured and investigated.

NOUMENAL...Meaning & Value

PHENOMENAL...Physical realm in which we live

Following Kant, Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard would restate the tension as two realms utterly separated from one another. The realm of Non-Reason and the realm of Reason. In other words, the realm of non-rational volition and the realm of rational thought. For man to have any degree of optimism about life and meaningfulness it required in Kierkegaard's thought "a blind leap of faith" from the lower realm of rational reason to the upper realm of non-reason.

NON-REASON... Faith & Optimism

REASON... Pessimism

One of the consequences of Kierkegaardianism has been "a widespread concept of the dichotomy between reason and non-reason, with no interchange between them. The lower story area of reason is totally isolated from the optimistic area of non-reason." (*How Should We Then Live*, Francis Schaeffer, p.174)

Francis Schaeffer ties all this together in his book called *Escape from Reason*. Schaeffer shows that modern man is schizoid in his thinking. He has split the world into two areas. Schaeffer called these two dichotomized realms, the upper story and the lower story. The lower storey was the natural world, the mechanized world of cause and effect. The upper storey is the realm of meaning and value, or purpose and hope. The upper storey is the realm of God, the world of faith.

Classical liberal theology, then, asserts a complete chasm between God and man in the ability of God to give or man to understand word revelation.

But this philosophical position, flies in the face of the testimony of Holy Scripture. Cottrell's analysis that fills page 49 is succinct & on target.

The Scriptures constantly picture God as speaking to mankind. The very concept of a "prophet" implies word revelation.

Hebrews 1:1 dogmatically asserts, "God, after he spoke long ago to the fathers..."

Jesus Himself appealed constantly to word revelation saying, "It is written", and "have you not read?"

Indeed, ponder that in the Incarnation God supremely bridged the alleged unbridgeable chasm.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1) Here is the realm of Kant's *noumenal*, Plato's Universal, Philosophy's Unity, liberal theologies Upper Storey of meaningfulness & hope!

But observe that the Scripture continues to say... "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*" (John 1:14) Here is Kant's *phenomenal*, Aristotle's Particulars, Philosophy's Diversity, liberal theologies Lower Storey of man and his reason!

An unbridgeable chasm? By us, Yes! But not by God! Philosophy was indeed on the trail of truth as it pondered this tension between the Universal and Particulars. But, lacking the insight of Divine Revelation and working with a Fallen Intellect, Volition and Heart, philosophy both then and today mires down in error.

God has revealed Himself to us through General Revelation in both the created realm (Rom 1) and the moral law within (Rom 2), and through Special Revelation (Heb 1 & 2 Tim 3:16). God has not been silent!

As God's written revelation, the Bible is therefore most profitable for us to study and meditate upon. Indeed, the man is "*blessed*" who "*meditates*" on God's law "*day and night*" (Psalm 1:1-2)

God commands Joshua saying, *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.* (Joshua 1:8)

May our prayer be, *Establish Thy word to Thy servant...* (Psalm 119:38)

2. DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

2.1. All Scripture is *God-Breathed*– Inspiration

2.1.1. What does it mean when we claim the Scripture is inspired?

Cottrell succinctly describes the process. "First, God places the message in the prophet's mind in some way. This is the act of revelation. Second, the prophet delivers this same revealed message to others, either orally or in writing." (p.50)

This raises the question of how accurate was the message as it was communicated through the human agency. The Biblical answer to this question is theologically framed as **Inspiration**.

Cottrell's definition is good: "Inspiration is the supernatural influence exerted by the Holy Spirit upon prophets and apostles which enabled them to communicate without error or omission those truths, received through revelation or otherwise, which God deemed necessary for our salvation and service." (p.50)

2.1.2. What is the Scriptural teaching about Inspiration?

Perhaps the most foundational New Testament passage describing Inspiration is 2 Tim 3:16.

*"All Scripture is **breathed out by God** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness..."* (ESV)

The word *theopneustos* literally means “God-breathed!” That is to say, that when the human writers of Sacred Writ were writing the Spirit of God was breathing through them Divine Truth.

This raises Holy Scripture to a level utterly above, transcendentally above every other human writing. Whether we speak of the Holy Scripture, Sacred Scripture or Sacred Writ, all speak of the sacred or Divine nature of the words.

A second most fundamental passage on this subject is Peter’s strong affirmation in 2 Peter 1:20-21.

Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.(ESV)

Peter here says that no writer of Scripture wrote out of his own stuff. Instead he communicated “*from God*” as they were “*carried along by the Holy Spirit*”. Who is carrying who? Who is controlling this process? Who is the power underneath? God & God alone.

The clear testimony of Jesus to the *God-breathed* nature of Holy Scripture abounds throughout the Gospels.

Christ implicitly refers to Scriptures transcendental nature in Matthew 5:18. “*For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*”

Christ again refers to the transcendental nature of Scripture, also setting forth it’s eternal nature as absolute truth in John 10:35. *If he called them gods to whom the word of God came-- and Scripture cannot be broken.*

Coupling the stunning truth claim of Jesus when He said, “I am the way, and the truth and the life...” (John 14:6), with His prayer, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17), brings us face to face with deeper eternal meaning, paradoxical in nature.

For He Who was The Logos, Who was God, also claimed to be The Truth and stated that God’s word is truth. Who of us can fully plumb the depth of meaning contained here?

One’s view of the nature of Scripture reflects heavily upon one’s view of the nature of Jesus Christ.

2.1.3. The Scope of Inspiration

Here is meant the verbal, plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture. Plenary simply means full. This is to say, that all of the portions of Scripture were overseen by God the Spirit.

The need for this distinctiveness has been the shifting claims by liberal theology challenging the extent of Inspiration.

Some would say that only the messengers were inspired and not the message.

Others that only the thought content was inspired and not the words themselves.

Others would limit inspiration to only those parts of the Bible that are didactic in nature, actually setting forth doctrine.

It must be understood that all attempts to limit the scope of the God-breathed nature of Scripture are foreign to Scripture itself; and foreign to the view Jesus had of Scripture.

The limitations are a result of epistemological pre-suppositions concerning the ability of God to speak and man to understand.

Most basically, I would suggest, as R.C. Sproul has suggested that if we can accept Genesis 1:1, we should have no problem accepting any other miraculous claim in Scripture.” End of discussion. At least it should be.

2.2. God’s Truthfulness in Scripture – Inerrancy

2.2.1. The meaning of Inerrancy

While the term itself is not found in Scripture, the concept clearly is.

What is fundamentally at stake is “the concept of the absolute truth and trustworthiness of the Bible.” (Cottrell, p.57)

Parameters? (1) The issue is not semantics. (2) The issue is not the copies & translations. (3) The issue is not a modern day laboratory precision use of language. (4) The issue is not literalism to the exclusion of symbolism and the figurative use of words. (5) The issue is not the mode of inspiration. (6) The issue is not what church tradition teaches.

Historically the term “infallible” was used to describe the inability of Holy Scripture to fail. *“Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.”* (Psalm 119:89)

2.2.2. The Scriptural Basis for Inerrancy

Consider the syllogism Cottrell presents...

Major premise: Every word breathed out by God is true (without error)

Minor premise: Every word of Scripture is breathed out by God

Conclusion: Every word of Scripture is true and therefore inerrant

Major premise? Titus 1:2 refers to God “*who cannot lie*” (NASV), or “*who never lies*” (ESV). Furthermore, if God is omniscient, knowing all things (1 John 3:20), then He is incapable of erring and will therefore always speak truth.

Minor premise?

Conclusion? “If inspiration does not result in inerrancy, then it has no purpose; if there are errors in Scripture, then inspiration is irrelevant and futile.” (Cottrell, p.59)

Consider Jesus’ use of simple logic in John 10:35...

Major premise: No Scripture can be broken.

Minor premise: Psalm 82:6 is Scripture.

Conclusion: Therefore Psalm 82:6 cannot be broken

Observe, first that Jesus uses syllogistic reasoning to establish His truth claim about Scripture. Observe, secondly, that Jesus accepted presuppositionally, as actual truth, the major premise that Scripture cannot be broken. That the Scripture is inerrant was the view of Christ.

2.2.3. Problems with a denial of Inerrancy

May we imitate God and intentionally lie in small matters? Can we really trust God in anything He says? We have made our own minds a higher standard of truth than Scripture. We must also accept the possibility of Scriptural error not only in minor details but also in doctrinal passages as well.

The most foundational problem with a denial of Inerrancy is that it contradicts Jesus.

2.3. God’s Authority resides in Scripture

2.3.1. Authority in the fullest sense is a personal concept.

2.3.2. Scripture has God’s authority precisely because it is the Word of God

What did the prefatory words mean, “*Thus saith the LORD*”? This phrase appears hundreds of times in the Old Testament.

It was clearly understood that disbelief or disobedience toward anything a prophet said was disbelief or disobedience toward God Himself! (Deut. 18:19; 1 Sam 10:8; 13:13-14; 15:3, 19, 23)

Grudem says, “The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.” (Systematic Theology, Grudem, p.73)

2.3.3. Ponder carefully what God meant when He spoke Isaiah 66:1-2

Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

2.3.4. Finally, consider the view of the Bible's authority that Christ Jesus held

When under the extreme spiritual duress of His temptation in the wilderness He quoted from it saying, "It is written" in response to each temptation.

When under the extreme physical, emotional and spiritual duress of the crucifixion, amidst His anguish He cries out, "*Eli, Eli, lemasabachthani?*" that is, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46), literally quoting the opening words of the twenty-second Psalm.

He forbade the placing of the teaching of man above the Holy Scripture saying, "*So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God.*" (Matthew 15:6)

For Jesus, an appeal to Scripture was sufficient to end the debate. He would say, "Have you never read?"... (Matthew 21:16,42; Mark 12:26)

*But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? **He is not God of the dead, but of the living.**" And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching. (Matthew 22:29-33; ESV)*

The crowds who were listening to Jesus' teaching in the Temple were struck dumb with amazement. It was a profound answer because Jesus used the Torah itself, turning the argument on the tense of the Hebrew verb, "I am".

Jesus built his theology upon even the tense of a verb in a sentence! What are the implications of this for sound essentially literalistic translations? How important are the English words chosen in translation? How important is the very verb tense conveyed in the English translation? **For Jesus, the tense of the verb established the theology of the resurrection of the dead!**

For Christ, then, the Scriptures held final and lasting authority. He said, "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*" (Matthew 5:17)

3. DOCTRINE OF GOD

3.1. The Names of God

Understanding the names of God constitutes a difficulty of human thought. For He is the Incomprehensible One, infinitely exalted above all creation.

Yet, in His names He descends to the finite realm enabling us to grasp a part of the Divine Reality through the use of analogical language.

What do we mean by analogical language? Univocal, Equivocal & Analogical usages of language...

3.1.1. The Names of God in General

Unger says, “The two essential and personal names of God in the Hebrew Scriptures are *Elohim* and *Jehovah* (more correctly *Yahweh*); the former calling attention to the fullness of divine power, the latter meaning, ‘He Who is,’ and thus declaring the divine Self-existence. The terms are varied or combined with others to bring out or emphasize certain attributes of the Godhead, such variations or combinations being rendered in our English version, ‘God Almighty,’ ‘The Living God,’ ‘The Most High,’ ‘The Lord,’ or ‘The God of Hosts.’” (*Ungers Bible Dictionary*, 409)

Unger continues with a broad definition of God saying, “God as revealed through the Scriptures is the one Infinite and Eternal Being. He is purely spiritual, the Supreme Personal Intelligence, the Creator and Preserver of all things, the perfect Moral Ruler of the universe; he is the only proper object of worship; he is the tri-personal – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constituting one God-head.” (*ibid.*, 410)

3.1.2. Old Testament Names

Bavinck says, “The name *Elohim* designates God as Creator and Preserver of all things; *El-Shaddai* represents him as the Mighty One, who makes nature subservient to grace; *Jehovah* describes him as the One whose faithfulness endure forever; *Jehovah Sabaoth* characterized him as the King in the fulness of his glory, surrounded by organized host of angels, governing the entire universe as the Omnipotent One, and in his temple receiving the honor and adoration of all his creatures.”

3.1.2.1. *EL*, *ELOHIM*, and *ELYON*

The most simple name of God is ‘*El*, which means first, strong or mighty, and is used 238x.

The name ‘*Elohim* is probably derived from the root, ‘*alah*, to be smitten with fear. The name ‘*Elyon* is derived from ‘*alah*, to go up, be elevated. It designates God as the high and exalted One.

Elohim (#433; appearing 2570x) is the first personal name of God in the Hebrew Scriptures. *Elohim* calls attention to the fullness of divine power. *Elohim* is the plural form of *El*, meaning “Strong One.”

The word *Elohim* is the plural of *El* and is the first name for God given in the Old Testament (Genesis 1:1).

The name *Elohim* is unique to Hebraic thinking: it occurs only in Hebrew and in no other ancient Semitic language.

The traditional Jewish understanding is that *Elohim* is the Name of God as the Creator and Judge of the universe (Gen 1:1-2; 4a).

3.1.2.2. **YAHWEH**

The second personal name of God in the Hebrew Scriptures is also the most common and the most important name for God in the Old Testament. Of interest is that in our English versions this name never even gets translated. Whenever you see the word LORD in all capital letters, you know that this name is behind it.

In Hebrew the name had four letters—YHWH—and may have been pronounced something like *Yahweh*. The Jews came to regard this word with such reverence that they would never take it upon their lips, lest they inadvertently take the name in vain

So whenever they came to this name in their reading, they pronounced the word "*adonai*" which means "my lord." The English versions have basically followed the same pattern. They translate the proper name *Yahweh* with the word LORD in all caps.

This is not a very satisfactory thing to do, because the English word LORD does not communicate to our ears a proper name like John or Michael or Noël. But *Yahweh* is God's proper name in Hebrew.

The importance of it can be seen in the sheer frequency of its use. It occurs 6,828 times in the Old Testament.

That's more than three times as often as the simple word for "God" (*Elohim* - 2,570 & *El* - 238).

What this shows is that God aims to be known not as a generic deity, but as a specific Person with a name that carries his unique character and mission.

(Note: In ancient times, the Hebrew scribes wrote only consonants with no vowels, this Divine name consisted of four consonants. It historically has been referred to as the *tetragrammaton*, meaning ‘the four-letter-word’. The word Jehovah originated from an attempt to pronounce the consonants YHWH with the vowels from the word *adonai*.)

The Meaning of *Yahweh* from Exodus 3

Moses says to God in verse 13, *"If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"* God also said to Moses, *"Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD (that is, Yahweh!), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."*

First, in verse 14 God says, *"I AM WHO I AM."*

Second, in verse 14 God says, *"I AM has sent me to you."*

Third, in verse 15 God says, *"Yahweh . . . has sent me to you . . . this is my name for ever."*

Two facts in this text provide an interpretation of the name *Yahweh*...

One is that the name *Yahweh* and the name *I AM* are built out of the same Hebrew word (*hayah*). The other is that *Yahweh* seems to be used here interchangeably with *I AM*. *"I AM has sent me to you"* (v. 14). *"Yahweh . . . has sent me to you"* (v. 15).

I think it would be safe to say that God's purpose in this meeting with Moses is to reveal, as he never had before (Exodus 6:2), the meaning of his personal name *Yahweh*. The key is in the phrase *I AM* and especially in the phrase, *I AM WHO I AM*. So here is where we ought to spend time meditating... What does it mean when you ask your God, Who are you?...and he answers, *I AM WHO I AM*?

3.1.2.3. EL SHADDAI

Exodus 5:22-6:8

*Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? 23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all." 6:1 But the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land." 2 God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as **God Almighty**, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. 4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. 5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. 6 Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. 7 I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'"*

The Hebrew behind the English GOD ALMIGHTY is "*El Shaddai*."

The translation ALMIGHTY captures the essence of the word. Job 37:23 leads me this way, "*The ALMIGHTY—we cannot find him; he is great in power.*" There may be other aspects of the meaning of *El Shaddai*, but the idea of power seems central.

John Piper offers the following...

Ponder why God reminds Moses of His Names

In Exodus 6:2–8 God gives Moses the assurance he needs that God has the ability and intention to deliver his people from the hands of Pharaoh. First he reminds Moses of his name revealed back in Exodus 3:14. Verse 2: I am YAHWEH! Verse 6: I am YAHWEH! Verse 8: I am YAHWEH!

In other words, remember that I AM WHO I AM. I have not ceased to be God because little Pharaoh is huffing and puffing about your command. I AM WHO I AM. I do not change. You *will* be delivered.

Then in verse 3 God reminds Moses of another name. He says, "*I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as GOD ALMIGHTY, but by my name YAHWEH I did not make myself known to them.*"

Why did God say this to Moses? How does this encourage Moses that God's promised deliverance is really in the offing?

What God is pointing out here is that *El Shaddai* was the covenant name for God to the Patriarchs until the time of Moses. This text brings this out.

It seems that God's point was something like this: "The name YAHWEH is a greater name than the name GOD ALMIGHTY. I did not reveal the full meaning of my name YAHWEH to Abraham. Only recently have I made known to you the meaning of my name YAHWEH. This is a special privilege that your forefathers never had.

But look at what name I did reveal to them—GOD ALMIGHTY! With a name like that before them, they should have been filled with confidence in me. How much more, then, should you, since you've been given the fuller revelation of my character in the name YAHWEH!" If Israel learned the first-grade lesson that their God is GOD ALMIGHTY, then surely now, after the second-grade lesson that God is I AM WHO I AM, they will be all the more courageous.

Then in verse 4 God reminds Moses that what he did for Abraham as GOD ALMIGHTY was establish his covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan.

In other words God says, "If as GOD ALMIGHTY I made a solemn agreement with your fathers to give them the promised land, then how much more, now that you know me as YAHWEH, can you have confidence that I will deliver this people and fulfill my covenant promise to bring them into the land of Canaan!"

Together the names *EL SHADDAI* (God Almighty) and *YAHWEH* (I Am Who I Am) were intended to give Moses all the assurance he would need to press on with the mission God had given him in Egypt.

3.1.2.4. *ADONAI*

Adonai (#136; appearing 439x) is the plural of *Adon*, meaning ‘Lord, Master or Owner’. God is called the “Lord of lords” (Deuteronomy 10:17) and Psalm 8:1 describes God as “*Yahweh* our *Adonai*.”

The plural form, like the plural form *Elohim*, is regularly used with singular verbs and modifiers, thus speaking of the “plural of majesty”.

You will remember that the Masoretes ensured that the sacred Name of the YHWH, would not be taken in vain by putting the vowel marks for *Adonai* under the letters of the tetragrammaton.

There are two uses of the English word Lord in your Bible.

Lord without all caps is some form of *adonai*. This is the most exalted title given to God in the Old Testament, representing absolute sovereignty. LORD, in all caps, is *Yahweh*. This is the sacred, ineffable name of God. Lord is God’s exalted title, and LORD is his name.

The title, Lord, that is reserved for God in the Old Testament, is given to Christ in the New Testament. Thus when Jesus is said to have the name above every name, it is not "Jesus" Paul is talking about—it is *kurios* (Greek) or *adonai* (Hebrew).

The Hebrew word itself... the addition of *aito adon* intensifies or elevates its meaning, changing it to mean “the ultimate Lord, the supreme Lord, or the Lord of all.”

The title *Adonai*, therefore emphasizes the sovereignty or Lordship of God.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts! (Isa 6:1-5)

The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” (Psalms 110:1; ESV) More accurately translated it would read, “Yahweh said unto my Adonai...

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” 2 But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will

you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?
(Genesis 15:1-2; ESV)

Consider, for a moment, the true depth of meaning in Abram's reply. He said "*Master Yahweh (Adonai-YHWH), what will you give me...*

It's a well established fact that Abram was master (*adoni--* in the singular form) over a considerable number of people and as such, he very well understood the role of each in the relationship.

The master exercised complete and total possession on the one hand while the servant demonstrated absolute submission on the other.

In addressing God as *Adonai-Yahweh*, Abram acknowledged God's complete and perfect right of possession to all that he was and had.

What should our response be to the One Who is called our *Adonai*? Absolute submission! Here is the concept of Lordship, of Sovereignty, with subsequent submission and obedient reverence.

3.1.3. New Testament Names

Theos

Kurios

Pater

3.1.4. I Am that I Am

And God said unto Moses, I AM that I AM: and he said, Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you. (Ex 3:14)

This unique name of God was given to stress the truth that He is timeless and self-existent; the eternal One.

The Lord Jesus Christ appropriated this divine name to Himself in John 8:58. It is well known that there are seven great "*I am*'s" in the gospel of John, each of which is rich with spiritual depth of meaning.

"I am the bread of life... the living bread" (6:35, 51)

"I am the light of the world... the light of life" (8:12)

"I am the door of the sheep" (10:7)

"I am the good shepherd... [Who] gives His life for the sheep" (10:11)

"I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25)

“I am the way, the truth and the life” (14:6)

“I am the true vine” (15:1)

It is well known that this magnificent self-assertion of the Lord permeates the whole Bible, from its first use in Genesis 15:1, *“I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward,”* to its final occurrence in Revelation 22:16, *“I am...the bright and morning star.”*

3.1.5. The Name above Every Name

Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the Name that is above every Name. (Philippians 2:9)

There are three primary names for God used in the Old Testament: *Elohim*, *Yahweh*, and *Adonai*. In the New Testament, both *Yahweh* and *Adonai* are translated as “Lord” (Greek, *kurios*) and applied to Christ. This word is also applied occasionally to human “lords,” but is specifically used as a name or title of God or Christ no less than 663 times.

His human name, of course, was Jesus (“Yahweh is Savior”), but this name is used by itself only 22 times in the epistles – always with special emphasis on His humanity. Although it was the common name used repeatedly in the gospel narratives, it is significant that the disciples and other believers almost always addressed Him personally as “Lord,” never simply as “Jesus.” Unbelievers and demons, on the other hand, never addressed Him as “Lord.”

In the great testimony of His coming exaltation, Paul says He has been given “the name” (the definite article is in the original) above every name. At this “name of Jesus” (with the “of” indicating the possessive – that is, “the name now belonging to the man Jesus who died on the cross”), every knee must bow, and every tongue must someday confess “that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2 :10, 11)

[*Days of Praise*, May 17th, 2008, Henry M. Morris)

3.2. The Attributes of God

The question of classification

3.2.1. The Incommunicable Attributes of God (God as the Absolute Being)

3.2.1.1. Self-Existence

Definition: *“This means that God has the ground of His existence in Himself, and unlike man, does not depend on anything outside of Himself. He is independent in His Being, in His virtues and actions, and causes all His creatures to depend on Him. The idea is embodied in the name Jehovah and finds expression in the following passages, Ps. 33:11; 115:3; Isa. 40:18 ff.; Dan. 4:35; John 5:26; Rom. 11:33-36; Acts 17:25; Rev. 4:11.”* (Summary of Christian Doctrine, Berkhof)

The idea of God's self-existence was historically expressed by the term *aseitas*, meaning self-originated. While this captures accurately the idea that God is independent in His Being, Reformed theologians generally substituted for it the word *independentia* (independence), so as to express that God is independent in everything else.

In other words, He does not need, in a necessary sense, the created realm for anything. From all eternity the Triune God was infinitely self-sufficient in all possible ways. This self-existence of God finds expression in the name Yahweh or Jehovah.

Consider Christ's assertion of this very thing in John 5:26. *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.*

God's ground for existence is Himself. God exists by virtue of His very nature as uncreated, without origin, Being. In the Divine language, He is the One "*Who was, Who is and Who is to come.*"

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. (Acts 17:24-25)

Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine. (Job 41:11)

The Triune God has had perfect love and fellowship and communication within the Godhead from all eternity past.

And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:5, 24)

In this attribute we see the qualitative difference between God and the created realm. He necessarily exists forever.

Yet as stunning as this is, the Scriptures balance this with the stunning revelation that we and all creation can glorify God and bring Him joy!

"...everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." (Isaiah 43:7)

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:11-12)

Ponder the bottom line that without the Divine Attribute of God's Self-Existence, *reality cannot be explained*. For if anything exists (and it does), there must be a self-existent

something! We are then faced with the choice between a self-existent eternal cosmos or a self-existent eternal Creator God.

3.2.1.2. Immutability

Definition: *“Scripture teaches that God is unchangeable. He is forever the same in His divine Being and perfections, and also in His purposes and promises, Num. 23:19; Pa 33:11; 102:27; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:17; Jas. 1:17. This does not mean, however, that there is no movement in God. The Bible speaks of Him as coming and going, hiding and revealing Himself. He is also said to repent, but this is evidently only a human way of speaking of God, Ex. 32:14; Jonah 3:10, and really indicates a change in man's relation to God.”* (Summary of Christian Doctrine, Berkhof)

“Immutability is one of the Divine perfections which is not sufficiently pondered. It is one of the excellencies of the Creator which distinguishes Him from all His creatures. God is perpetually the same: subject to no change in His being, attributes, or determinations. Therefore God is compared to a rock (Deut 32:4, etc.) which remains immovable, when the entire ocean surrounding it is continually in a fluctuating state; even so, though all creatures are subject to change, God is immutable. Because God has no beginning and no ending, He can know no change. He is everlastingly “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17).” (*The Attributes of God*, Arthur W. Pink; 1886 – 1952)

Logic instructs us that any change in God, Who is Absolute Perfection would necessarily involve either improvement or deterioration. Both are equally impossible.

The great Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck says, *“The doctrine of God's immutability is of the highest significance for religion. The contrast between being and becoming marks the difference between the Creator and the creature. Every creature is continually becoming. It is changeable, constantly striving, seeks rest and satisfaction, and finds this rest in God, in him alone, for only he is pure being and no becoming. Hence, in Scripture God is often called the Rock...”* (*The Doctrine of God*, Herman Bavinck, p.149)

For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. (Malachi 3:6)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (James 1:17)

The sometimes alleged **Impassability of God**... Chapter 2 of the Westminster Confession of Faith says that God is “without...passions.

Yet, this goes beyond what Scripture teaches, contradicting in fact, many clear passages: God rejoices (Isa. 62:5), grieves (Psalm 78:40), His wrath burns against His enemies (Ex. 32:10), etc...

GOD IS IMMUTABLE IN HIS ESSENCE

GOD IS IMMUTABLE IN HIS ATTRIBUTES GOD IS IMMUTABLE IN HIS COUNSEL

Consider the words of Arthur W. Pink in His book, *The Attributes of God*:

“Herein is SOLID COMFORT. Human nature cannot be relied upon; but God can! However unstable I may be, however fickle my friends may prove, God changes not. If He varied as we do, if He willed one thing today and another tomorrow, if He were controlled by caprice, who could confide in Him?

But, all praise to His glorious name, He is ever the same. His purpose is fixed, His will is stable, His word is sure. Here then is a rock on which we may fix our feet, while the mighty torrent is sweeping away everything around us. The permanence of God’s character guarantees the fulfillment of His promises: ‘For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed’, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.’ (Isa 54:10)

Herein is ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER. “What comfort would it be to pray to a god that, like the chameleon, changed color every moment? Who would put up a petition to an earthly prince that was so mutable as to grant a petition one day, and deny it another?” (Stephen Charnock, 1670)...

Herein is TERROR FOR THE WICKED. Those who defy Him, who break His laws, who have no concern for His glory, but who lived their lives as though He existed not, must not suppose that, when at the last they shall cry to Him for mercy, He will alter His will, revoke His word, and rescind His awful threatenings. No, He has declared, “Therefore will I also deal in fury: Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in Mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them” (Eze 8:18). God will not deny Himself to gratify their lusts. God is holy, unchangingly so. Therefore God hates sin, eternally hates it. Hence the eternity of the punishment of all who die in their sins.

‘The Divine immutability, like the cloud which interposed between the Israelites and the Egyptian army, has a dark as well as a light side. It insures the execution of His threatenings, as well as the performance of His promises; and destroys the hope which the guilty fondly cherish, that He will be all lenity to His frail and erring creatures, and that they will be much more lightly dealt with than the declarations of His own Word would lead us to expect. We oppose to these deceitful and presumptuous speculations the solemn truth, that God is unchanging in veracity and purpose, in faithfulness and justice.’” (John Dick, 1850)

3.2.1.3.Eternality

Definition: “*That perfection of God whereby He is elevated above all temporal limits and all succession of moments, and possesses the whole of His existence in one indivisible present.*” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p. 60)

Grudem says, “God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.” (ibid. p.168)

God is in no way limited or confined to this time-space universe. God is timeless in His own Being.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (Psalm 90:2)

Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable. (Job 36:26)

'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.' (Revelation 1:8)

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!' (Revelation 4:8)

Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. (John 8:58)

Grudem says, "The study of physics tells us that matter and time and space must all occur together: if there is no matter, there can be no space or time either. Thus, before God created the universe, there was no 'time,' at least not in the sense of a succession of moments one after another." (ibid. p.169)

God sees all time equally vividly. *"For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night." (Psalm 90:4)*

God alone is the One who knows and declares events before they occur. *"Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! 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." (Isaiah 45:21)*

Yet, God sees events in time and acts in time!

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. (Gal 4:4-5)

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)

3.2.1.4. Omnipresence or Immensity

Definition: “*That perfection of the Divine Being by which He transcends all spatial limitations, and yet is present in every point of space with His whole Being.*” (Systematic Theology, Berkhof, p.60)

In view here is both a negation and affirmation. Negatively, Scripture teaches that God is not in any way limited by space. Positively, Scripture teaches that God is infinitely transcendentally above space and yet fills every part of space with His whole Being.

Stunning to ponder the full implication of Genesis 1:1. For if God created the universe, He Himself is not contained within nor limited to it. Think on that next time you gaze up at the starry host.

Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. (Deut 10:14; ESV)

God is present everywhere.

Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:24; ESV)

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. (Psalm 139:7-10; ESV)

But God is not limited to space. He is infinite.

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! (1 Kings 8:27; ESV)

There is the physical realm or dimension and the spirit realm or dimension. But God is not limited to or by either. God Himself is not equivalent to any part of creation or to all of it. The Divine Being is Himself His own realm. He is the Divine realm or dimension. And He is infinite. Who of us can get our mind around that God is therefore both transcendent and immanent.

3.2.1.5. Unity

Grudem says, “God is not divided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times.” (p.177)

This attribute has also been called God’s simplicity, using the word simplicity in the sense of “not composed of parts.”

A distinction is historically made between the *unitassingularitatis* and the *unitassimplicitatis*.

The unity of singularity stresses the oneness and uniqueness of God, the fact that he is numerically one and as such He is unique.

Paul writes to Timothy saying, *“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”* (1 Tim 2:5)

The unity of simplicity stresses the inner and qualitative unity of the Divine Being. God is free from division into parts, and therefore free from compositeness. This means that the three Persons in the Godhead are not so many parts of which the Divine essence is composed.

Solomon prayed, *“That all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other.”* (I Kings 8:60; ESV)

“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.” (I Corinthians 8:6; ESV)

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” (Deut 6:8; ESV)

3.2.2. The Communicable Attributes of God

Attributes which describe God’s Being

3.2.2.1. Spirituality

Definition: *“God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence.”* (Systematic Theology, Grudem, p.188)

Scripture does not give a definition of God. The closest we come is Christ’s statement in John 4:24, *“God is spirit.”* Observe that it does not say God is a spirit. He is Spirit.

Paul speaks of Him as *“the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”*(1 Timothy 1:17)

Why is God spirit? Clearly because it is the greatest most excellent way to exist! While He made the angels spirits, and mankind both spirit and physical flesh, in both cases these are created spirits. God alone is uncreated Spirit.

3.2.2.2. Invisibility

Definition: *“God’s invisibility means that God’s total essence, all of his spiritual being, will never be able to be seen by us, yet God still shows Himself to us through visible, created things.”* (Grudem, p.188)

Scripture speaks of “*He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.*” (1 Tim 6:15-16)

In response to the request by Moses, God said, “*you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.*” (Exodus 33:20)

Ponder that, while in heaven, we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2), and yet never be able to see or know all of God for “His greatness is unsearchable” (Psalm 145:3 & John 6:16). He is ontologically His own dimension which no eye may see.

Attributes that describe God’s Mental Attributes

3.2.2.3. **Omniscience** (Knowledge)

Definition: “God fully knows Himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.” (Grudem, p.190)

Scripture testifies to the knowledge of God abundantly: 1 Samuel 2:3; Job 12:13; Psalm 94:9; 147:4; Isaiah 29:15 & 40:27,28.

The Lord knows the tiniest of details of our lives (Matthew 6:8; 10:30). He knows our actions and thoughts before they are even spoken (Psalm 139). God knows everything (1 John 3:20), including the future! (Isaiah 46:9-10).

But, does God’s knowledge of future events predetermine those events thus taking away freedom of choice? No. The eternal omniscient God is well able to know what choices will be made and then state the future before it happens, yet such statement being made entirely upon His omniscient knowledge of the very real choice the individual would make.

Wisdom

Definition: “*That perfection of God whereby He applies His knowledge to the attainment of His ends in a way which glorifies Him most.*” (Systematic Theology, Berkhof, p.69)

“The wisdom of God may regarded as a particular aspect of His knowledge. It is quite evident that knowledge and wisdom are not the same, though they are closely related. They do not always accompany each other. An uneducated man may be superior to a scholar in wisdom. Knowledge is acquired by study, but wisdom results from an intuitive insight into things. The former is theoretical, while the latter is practical, making knowledge subservient to some specific purpose.” (Systematic Theology, Berkhof, p.69)

Dutch Theologian Herman Bavinck says, “Wisdom and knowledge are rooted in different capacities of the soul. The source of *knowledge* is study; of *wisdom*, discernment. *Knowledge* is discursive; *wisdom* intuitive. *Knowledge* is theoretical; *wisdom* practical, teleological; it makes knowledge subservient to an end. *Knowledge* is a matter of the mind apart from the will; *wisdom* is a matter of the mind made subservient to the will. *Knowledge* is often very unpractical; i.e., not adapted to the common affairs of life, *wisdom* is adapted to

life; it is ethical in character; it is the art of proper living; it characterizes the man who rightly employs his great store of knowledge, and who chooses the best end and the best means for reaching that end.” (*The Doctrine of God*, Bavinck, p.195-196)

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! (Romans 11:33).

O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. (Psalm 104:24)

God’s wisdom is such that He is able to use even evil to achieve good. In His goodness He promises to do this very thing in the lives of believers, who love Him and are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Furthermore, He promises to anyone who asks of Him, He will give wisdom generously!” (James 1:5)

3.2.2.4. Veracity or Truthfulness

Definition: “*God’s truthfulness means that he is the true God, and that all his knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth.*” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.69)

The first part of this definition indicates that the God revealed in Scripture is the true or real God and that all other so-called gods are mere idols.

And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (1 John 5:20)

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.(John 17:3)

The second part of this definition indicates that all of God’s knowledge is true and is the final standard of truth. This means that God is reliable and faithful in His words.

The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. (Deut 32:4)

God’s truthfulness means that all of God’s words about Himself and about His creation completely corresponds to reality.

The truthfulness of God means that we can in part imitate Him by striving to have true knowledge about God and about His world.

The truthfulness of God means that we, as His children, should always strive to be truthful.

O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart... (Psalm 15:1,2)

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)

The truthfulness of God further means that we should love truth and hate falsehood (Exodus 20:16).

“Thus, Scripture teaches us that lying is wrong not only because of the great harm that comes from it (and much more harm comes from lying than we often realize), but also for an even deeper and more profound reason: when we lie we dishonor God and diminish his glory, for we, as those created in God’s image and created for the purpose of reflecting God’s glory in our lives, are acting in a way that is contrary to God’s won character.”
(Systematic Theology, Grudem, p.197)

Attributes that describe God’s Moral Attributes

3.2.2.5. Goodness

'The Goodness of God endureth continually' (Psa 52:1). The goodness of God refers to the perfection of His nature: 'God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all' (1 John 1:5). There is such an absolute perfection in God's nature and being that nothing is wanting to it or defective in it, and nothing can be added to it to make it better.

'He is originally good, good of Himself, which nothing else is; for all creatures are good only by participation and communication from God. He is essentially good; not only good, but goodness itself: the creature's good is a superadded quality, in God it is His essence. He is infinitely good; the creature's good is but a drop, but in God there in an infinite ocean or gathering together of good. He is eternally and immutably good, for He cannot be less good than He is; as there can be no addition made to Him, so no subtraction from Him' (Thomas Manton).

God is the *summum bonum*, the highest good.

The original Saxon meaning of our English word God is 'The Good.' God is not only the greatest of all beings, but the best. All the goodness there is in any creature has been imparted from the Creator, but God's goodness is underived, for it is the essence of His eternal nature. As God is infinite in power from all eternity, before there was any display thereof, or any act of omnipotency put forth, so He was eternally good before there was any communication of His bounty, or any creature to whom it might be imparted. Thus, the first manifestation of this divine perfection was in giving being to all things. 'Thou art good, and doest good' (Psa 119:68). God has in Himself an infinite and inexhaustible treasure of all blessedness, enough to fill all things.

All that emanates from God--His decrees, His creation, His laws, His providences--cannot be otherwise than good: as it is written, 'And God saw everything that He had made, and,

behold, it was very good' (Gen 1:31). Thus, the goodness of God is seen, first, in creation. The more closely the creature is studied, the more the beneficence of its Creator becomes apparent." (Pink, *The Attributes of God*)

3.2.2.5.1. Lovingkindness

Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me. This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. The LORD's lovingkindnesses (2617) indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness." (Lam 3:19-23; NASV)

The ESV translates it frequently as "steadfast love".

The Hebrew term, *cheded* (2617), usually indicates God's peculiar favor toward His people.

Cheded is one of the most important words in the Heb. O.T. *Cheded* "is more the attitude of love which contains mercy. The KJV's 'lovingkindness' is archaic, but not far from capturing the full meaning of the word. Other definitions are love, benevolence, kindness, good will, favor, benefit, grace, mercy, piety, loyalty, unflinching love, beauty." (Zodhiates, *Lexical Aides*)

Cheded stands in close relation to God's covenant (Nehemiah 1:5).

Cheded is the principle of forgiveness, Psalms 6:4; 31:17; 44:26; 109:26; Lamentations 3:22; of grace, Psalm 51:1.

Cheded is the principle of comfort, Psalm 119:76.

Cheded endures forever, Isaiah 54:8, 10.

Cheded is better than life, Psalm 63:3.

3.2.2.5.2. Mercy

"God's goodness toward those who are in misery is called compassion or pity; N.T. *eleos*." (Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, p.206)

Mercy is "the goodness or love of God shown to those who are in misery or distress, irrespective of their deserts." (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.72)

"If the grace of God contemplates man as guilty before God, and therefore in need of forgiveness, the mercy of God contemplates him as one who is bearing the consequences of sin, who is in a pitiable condition, and who therefore needs divine help." (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.72)

The compassion of God is manifested in His mercy. Sacred Writ says, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction...*” (2 Corinthians 1:3)

The command of God is that we be like Him in His mercy. “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*” (Matthew 5:7) Indeed, praise be to God our Father that “*mercy triumphs over judgment.*” (James 2:13)

3.2.2.5.3. Longsuffering

Longsuffering is “the aspect of the goodness or love of God in virtue of which He bears with the forward and evil in spite of their long continued disobedience.” (Systematic Theology, Berkhof, p.72)

“God’s goodness manifested in patience toward those who are deserving of punishment is called longsuffering...” (Bavinck, p.207)

This attribute of God’s goodness is simply incredible, in that by exercising it, He is fully aware of the continued rebellion of the sinner, and yet postpones the merited judgment of wrath.

Perhaps the premier statement of God’s redemptive exercise of longsuffering is made by the apostle Paul. He speaks “*of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.*” (Romans 3:24-25)

We are to imitate this aspect the Divine Goodness by practicing patience (Ephesians 4:2).

You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.
(James 5:8)

3.2.2.5.4. Grace

Grace is “the unmerited goodness or love of God to those who have forfeited it, and are by nature under a sentence of condemnation.” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.71)

“More gloriously God’s goodness is revealed when it is shown to those who have deserved nothing but evil; it is then called grace...” (Bavinck, p.207)

The grace of God is of the greatest practical significance for sinful mankind. Ponder prayerfully the willingness of God from the beginning to accept a substitute in place of the sinner. What if His nature demanded that retribution be poured out on the one actually guilty of the sin?

“God’s grace means God’s goodness toward those who deserve only punishment.”
(*Systematic Theology*, Grudem, p.197)

Sacred Writ refers to “the God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10). That which Scripture emphasizes concerning grace, is the utter lack of obligation on God’s part to give it. It is a free, with no connection to justice, action on His part. In fact, it is the very opposite of justice.

This is to say that grace is not just getting what we do not deserve, it is getting the very opposite of what we deserve.

In point of fact, in the accomplishment of redemption, God overturned the stone tablets of justice in a radical act of just yet unjust self-sacrifice. For the perfect One received punishment while the sinful ones received pardon. The perfect One received the opposite of what He deserved, so that the sinful ones could receive the opposite of what they deserve. Amazing grace!

3.2.2.5.5. Love

“When the goodness of God is exercised towards His rational creatures, it assumes the higher character of **love**...” (Systematic Theology, Berkhof, p.71)

“God’s goodness revealed in self-communication is called love...” (Bavinck, p.208)

Love is that perfection of God in which He eternally gives of Himself to others. Scripture tells us that “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8).

We see evidence of this attribute being active even amidst the Trinity in the High Priestly prayer of Christ Jesus. “*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*” (John 17:24)

The self-giving that characterizes the Trinity is expressed in God’s relationship to mankind, especially sinful man. “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” (1 John 4:10).

3.2.2.6. Holiness

3.2.2.6.1. Ontological Holiness

“It is this holiness of God which Otto, in his important work on *Das Heilige*, regards as that which is most essential in God, and which he designates as ‘the *numinous*.’ He regards it as part of the non-rational in God, which cannot be thought of conceptually, and which include such ideas as ‘absolute unapproachability’ and ‘absolute overpoweringness’ or ‘aweful majesty.’ It awakens in man a sense of absolute

nothingness, a ‘creature-consciousness’ or ‘creature-feeling,’ leading to absolute self-abasement.” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.73)

In this sense God’s holiness denotes that He is absolutely distinct from and transcendent to His creatures, exalted above them in infinite majesty.

It is this sense that is the basis of His other attributes, for it is this sense that speaks directly of the creature Creator distinction. Holiness is synonymous with divinity. “*The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness...*” (Amos 4:2).

It is this sense of God’s holiness described in the fearful worship that continuously surrounds He Who is seated upon The Throne. Describing the four living creatures, Sacred Scripture says, “*and day and night they never cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!’*” (Revelation 4:8)

“It is this holiness of God which Otto, in his important work on *Das Heilige*, regards as that which is most essential in God, and which he designates as ‘the *numinous*.’ He regards it as part of the non-rational in God, which cannot be thought of conceptually, and which include such ideas as ‘absolute unapproachability’ and ‘absolute overpoweringness’ or ‘aweful majesty.’ It awakens in man a sense of absolute nothingness, a ‘creature-consciousness’ or ‘creature-feeling,’ leading to absolute self-abasement.” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.73)

3.2.2.6.2. Ethical Holiness

The fundamental idea of God’s ethical holiness is also that of separation, but in this case it is a separation from that which is evil.

God can have no fellowship with sin. Elihu asserts, “*far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should do wrong.*” (Job 34:10)

“The ethical holiness of God may be defined as that perfection of God, in virtue of which He eternally wills and maintains His own moral excellence, abhors sin, and demands purity in his moral creatures.” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.74)

The holiness of God is revealed in the moral law, implanted in mankind’s heart (Romans 2:14, 15). The essence of it was carved by God Himself upon the two stone tablets.

It is this aspect of holiness which God commands his people to imitate. “*As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’*” (I Peter 1:14, 15)

3.2.2.7. Righteousness

The fundamental idea of righteousness is strict adherence to the law. Among men this presupposes a law to which conformity must be made. But though there is no law above God, He Himself, His very nature is the standard by which all law is judged.

Justice manifests itself especially in giving every man his due. The Hebrew terms for “righteous” and “righteousness” are *tsaddik*, *tsedhek*, and *tsedhakah*, and the corresponding Greek terms, *dikaio*s and *dikaio*sune, all contain the idea of conformity to a standard. This perfection of standard is repeatedly ascribed to God in the Scripture; Ezra 9:15; Psalm 119:137; 145:17; John 17:25; Revelation 16:5.

3.2.2.7.1. Rectitude

Rectitude is Latin for “straightness, but not applied to material things.”

“In morality, rightness of principle or practice; uprightness of mind; exact conformity to truth, or to the rules prescribed for moral conduct, either by divine or human laws. Rectitude of mind is the disposition to act in conformity to any known standard of right, truth or justice; rectitude of conduct is the actual conformity to such standard. Perfect rectitude belongs only to the Supreme Being. The more nearly the rectitude of men approaching to the standard of the divine law, the more exalted and dignified is their character. Want of rectitude is not only sinful, but debasing.” (*American Dictionary of the English Language*, Noah Webster 1828)

The rectitude of God is that standard of justice that he manifests as the Ruler of both the good and the evil.

On the basis of it He has instituted moral government upon the earth, as Daniel says, “*heaven rules*” and again, “*the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.*” (Daniel 4:26, 32)

It is on the basis of the rectitude of God that He has imposed a just law upon man, with promises of reward for the obedient, and threats of punishment for the transgressor.

3.2.2.7.2. Distributive Justice

Here is seen God’s rectitude in the execution of the law as He relates to the distribution of rewards and punishments. It is of two kinds.

The first is **Remunerative justice**, which manifests in the distribution of rewards to both man and angels. “It is really an expression of the divine love, dealing out its bounties, not on the basis of strict merit, for the creature can establish no absolute merit before the Creator, but according to promise and agreement, Luke 17:10; 1 Cor. 4:7.” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.75)

The second is **Retributive justice**, which relates to the infliction of penalties. Here is divine wrath on sin. Berkhof points out, “It should be noted that, while man does not merit the reward which he receives, he does merit the punishment which is meted out to him.” (ibid. p.75)

Attributes that describe God’s Volitional Attributes

3.2.2.8. Divine Sovereignty

3.2.2.8.1. Sovereign Will

Definition of Sovereignty: “Supreme power; supremacy; the possession of the highest power, or of uncontrollable power. Absolute sovereignty belongs to God only.” (American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster 1828)

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will... (Ephesians 1:11)

Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created. (Revel 4:11)

There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. (Romans 13:1)

God’s sovereignty is simply His absolute lordship, kingship or dominion. “*For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.*” (Psalm 97:9)

The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. (Psalm 103:19)

God’s sovereignty is that He is able to do what He purposes. “*The Lord has done what He purposed... (Lam 2:17).*

“You are my witnesses,’ declares the LORD, ‘and my servant whom I have chosen, 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 declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and I am God. Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back? (Isaiah 43:10-13; ESV)

God has, by His very nature as God, the potentiality to be the causation of everything. His will could be exercised in perfect obedience to His desire and statement of what will be.

Did He not, in the beginning, by His sovereign will, speak the command, “*Let there be...*”! Whom did He consult? Whom did He have to first answer to? As He demanded of Job... “*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*” (Job 38:4-7)

3.2.2.8.2. Sovereign Power (Omnipotence)

Closely related to God’s sovereign will is His sovereign power to do what He wills. The theological term used to describe this power is omnipotence.

Omnipotence means God is well able to do all that He wills to do. For who or what would thwart Him?

The rhetorical question is meaningfully asked, “*Is anything too hard*” for God? (Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:27)

As Creator of the entire created realm, God possesses the sovereign will and power to do whatever He chooses. His power is infinite.

However, He cannot do that which would deny His own nature. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). God cannot deny Himself (2 Tim 2:13).

3.2.2.8.3. The Paradox of Divine Sovereignty & human responsibility

Cottrell says to equate “divine sovereignty with omnicausality is arbitrary and antibiblical. Instead of causation, the key word for sovereignty is control.” (p.81)

God is in control of everything that happens, as either the causation or the One Who allowed it to happen. All that happens He either causes or allows.

The tension felt here is described by Ravi Zacharias as follows:

“The classic illustration of this in theology is the paradox between the responsibility of man and the sovereignty of God. How can God give us the freedom to exercise our own will and still be sovereign over the universe? Western theologians tend to confuse the question by asking which one of the two is binding. The answer is “both are binding.” This is a marvelous paradox that God brings to focus in the crucifixion of the God-man, Jesus Christ. Peter says in Acts, “This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross” (2:23). In the Crucifixion, God Himself was subject to evil men. Peter doesn’t tell us where God’s sovereignty ended and the responsibility of man began; he simply tells us that they are both real.

Another example is the paradox of Jesus weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, yet knowing that he would raise him in a moment. The fact that there is both pain and joy at the same time is a paradox and not a contradiction, for the emotions are not mutually exclusive. What about the paradox of faith and reason? Are they mutually exclusive? Absolutely not. God has put enough into this world to make faith in him a most reasonable stance, but He has left enough out to make it impossible to live by reason alone. Such is the paradoxical nature of Christianity, and Chesterton deals with it in extenso in his masterwork, *Orthodoxy*.

Although the human mind is engaged by mystery, we do not in turn know how to *engage it*. In other words, the paradox we encounter in matters of faith is not comfortable because we do not know how to hold the two parts of it in balance. Our compartmentalizing minds want to put everything into a box, and yet the claims of Christian belief are not mutually exclusive. God, in His divine sovereignty, has given to us liberties and freedoms. Since our sovereign God chose to grant us this privilege, it cannot be something that in any way diminishes His sovereignty. He circumscribes the limits of that freedom such that we cannot violate His sovereign plan and His will, but that does not negate the freedom that we enjoy. Paradox sits uncomfortably on our rational mind, but then so should the Incarnation, since it is the advent of a Person who is proclaimed to be very God of very God while also being very man of very man. How can God be entirely man while still being entirely God? It's a paradox of the highest order...." (<http://www.rzim.org/publications/jttran.php?seqid=87>)

God's Sovereignty is "The decree of God in His singular plan involving choices and the potential of evil whereby for His good pleasure to His glory He does His own purpose."
– Pastor/Author Tommy Nelson

Attributes that describe God's Summary Attributes

3.2.2.9. Perfection

"God completely possess all excellent qualities and lacks no part of any qualities that would be desirable for Him." (Grudem, p.218)

He is absolute perfection (Matthew 4:48; Psalm 18:30, etc...).

3.2.2.10. Beauty

Here is the 3rd of the Three Transcendental Concepts...

"God is the sum of all desirable qualities" (Grudem, p.219)

One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)

3.2.2.11. Glory

The attribute here described is not that of character. The focus is upon “the created brightness that surrounds God’s revelation of Himself.” (Grudem, p.220)

O LORD my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment... (Psalm 104:1-2)

Scripture speaks of “*He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.*” (1 Tim 6:15,16)

So bright is the Divine radiance that John’s revelation describes heaven saying, “*the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.*” (Rev 21:23)

Consider the description of the dazzling glory of God in Ezekiel chapter one. “*And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance. And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.*”

3.2.2.12. Blessedness

Blessedness, is a divine attribute; a perfection of the Divine being.

Traditionally, God’s blessedness has had an ambiguous place in the doctrine of Divine attributes.

For on the one hand, it seems to be a summary type category pervading all the Divine attributes. It summarily sets forward the manner in which God possesses and enjoys all His perfections. All that God is and all that he does, he is and does blessedly. What God’s attribute of glory is outwardly, his attribute of blessedness is inwardly. “Blessedness, it seems to me, should be seen as the interior state of God that corresponds to his outward glory.”

On the other hand, the comprehensive nature of blessedness renders an understanding of it difficult. Rather than being one of many on the list of Divine attributes, it seems to be more like the tone or timbre of all God’s attributes at once.

But how could God be eternally blessed if He is fundamentally a singular being as both Islam & Judaism assert?

For does not our existence reveal the deepest levels of human “blessedness” to rest in relationship? How, if God is an undivided singular one, could He be considered ‘blessed’?

Thus, the blessedness of God is grounded in the doctrine of the Trinity. For Divine blessedness is in the eternal & perfect fellowship of Father, Son, and Spirit that he has as one God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Ponder the manifested relational mixture of joy, love & glory from eternity past within the Godhead between Father & Son:

*“And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with **the glory that I had with you before the world existed**”* (John 17:5)

*“But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have **my joy fulfilled in themselves**”* (John 17:13)

*“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, **to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.** O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, **that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.**”*(John 17:24-26)

What God the Son describes here in prayer to God the Father is what theologians, based on Scriptural descriptions elsewhere, call the Divine Blessedness.

Thomas Aquinas, in discussion of the doctrines of Divine attributes, saw the Divine Blessedness as the transitional doctrine between the discussions of the one God and the triune God. The traditional method of pondering the Divine Blessedness, it seems, is at the very end of the divine attributes, as the last step before turning our attention to the blessed Trinity.

[Above is a summary of brief article by Fred Sanders at <http://www.scriptoriumdaily.com/2008/04/29/god-is-blessed/>]

“O Worship the King”

O worship the King, all glorious above,
O gratefully sing God's power and God's love;
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.

O tell of God's might, O sing of God's grace,
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space,
Whose chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
And dark is God's path on the wings of the storm.

The earth with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, thy power hath founded of old;
Hath 'stablished it fast by a changeless decree,
And round it hath cast, like a mantle, the sea.

Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
In thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail;
Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end,
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend.

3.2.3. The Holy Trinity

3.2.3.1. Introduction & Definition

“God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.” (*Systematic Theology*, Grudem, p.226)

“Within the one Being that is God, there exists eternally three coequal and coeternal Persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”(*The Forgotten Trinity*, White, pg.26)

3.2.3.2. The Old Testament’s adumbration of the Holy Trinity

Genesis 1:26, God speaks and says, *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”* What do the plural verb (“let us”) and the plural pronoun (“our”) mean? (See also Genesis 3:22; *“Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil...”*)

Plurality of majesty? Yet there is no other scriptural usage supporting this. Speaking to angels? Yet angels did not participate in the creation, nor was their image under consideration. The best explanation is that here at the beginning of God’s revelation to man is an adumbration leading in the direction of the Trinity. (*The Doctrine of God*, Bavinck, p.256)

Adumbration? From the Latin, *umbra*, a shade. “To give a faint shadow, or slight likeness; to exhibit a faint resemblance, like a shadow.” (*American Dictionary of the English Language*, Noah Webster, 1828)

“The fact that the name *Elohim* is plural in form to be sure does not prove the trinity; nevertheless, the additional fact that the advocates of monotheism never objected to the use of this name proves that the latter is not to be explained as a reminiscence of polytheism, but that it indicates the richness and fullness of the Divine Being.” (*The Doctrine of God*, Bavinck, p.256)

Consider the passages where one person is called “God” or “the Lord” and is distinguished from another person who is also said to be God.

Psalm 45:6-7 - *“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions...”*

Observe, here that the Scripture gives a description of a king which clearly ascribes to Him divinity calling Him “God” and saying that His throne is eternal.

But then, two separate persons are called God (*Elohim*). What is this but an adumbration of a clear plurality in the Godhead?

Psalm 110:1 - "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" (Psalm 110:1)

In Matthew 22:41-46, Jesus clearly understands David to be referring to two separate persons as "Lord". But who is David's "Lord" except God? And who, therefore, is saying to God, "Sit at my right hand...?"

Malachi 3:1-2 - "Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?"

The One speaking, "the LORD" (*Yahweh*), distinguishes Himself from "the Lord whom you seek" (*Adonai*). This strongly suggests two separate persons, both of Whom can be referred to using Divine titles.

Hosea 1:7, records God speaking of Judah and saying, "I will save them by the LORD their God"

The first verse of the book opens with the words, "The word of the LORD that came to Hosea..." (Hosea 1:1)

Then in verse seven, the same Divine Person, *Yahweh*, speaks and says, "I will save them by *Yahweh* their *Elohim*." But Who is speaking? And does He not refer to another as *Yahweh* their *Elohim*?

Isaiah 48:12-16, "Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! **I am he; I am the first, and I am the last. 13 My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together. 14 "Assemble, all of you, and listen! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; he shall perform his purpose on Babylon, and his arm shall be against the Chaldeans. 15 I, even I, have spoken and called him; I have brought him, and he will prosper in his way. 16 Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there." **And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit.**"**

There is a clear subject-object distinction between the One speaking and the *Lord GOD*. Furthermore, a 3rd apparent Person is referenced; *his Spirit*.

3.2.3.3. The Incarnation: The Unveiling of God's Triune nature (White, ch 12)

"The Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not in it before; but it brings out into clearer view much of what is in it but was only dimly or even not at all perceived

before. The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the Old Testament; but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view. Thus the Old Testament revelation of God is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended and enlarged.” (*The Forgotten Trinity*, B.B. Warfield, quoted by White, p.166)

This truth, this reality which has been from all eternity, was revealed in the Incarnation and coming of the Holy Spirit.

“We cannot speak of the doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, if we study exactness of speech, as revealed in the New Testament, any more than we can speak of it as revealed in the Old Testament. The Old Testament was written before its revelation; the New Testament after it. *The revelation itself was made not in word but in deed. It was made in the incarnation of God the Son, and the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit.* The relation of the two Testaments to this revelation is in the one case that of preparation for it, and in the other that of product of it. The revelation itself is embodied just in Christ and the Holy Spirit. *This is as much to say that the revelation of the Trinity was incidental to, and the inevitable effect of, the accomplishment of redemption.* It was in the coming of the Son of God in the likeness of sinful flesh to offer Himself a sacrifice for sin; and in the coming of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, that the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead was once for all revealed to men.” (ibid, p.166-167)

White summarizes, **“The Trinity is a doctrine not revealed merely in words but instead in the very action of the Triune God in redemption itself!**

And it is this, historically based nature of this revelation that “explains why we don’t find a single passage that lays out, in a creedal format, the doctrine of the Trinity.” (White, p.167)

“We may understand also, however, from the same central fact, why it is that the doctrine of the Trinity lies in the New Testament rather in the form of allusions than in express teaching, why it is rather everywhere presupposed, coming only here and there into incidental expression, than formally inculcated. It is because the revelation, having been made in the actual occurrences of redemption, was already the common property of all Christian hearts.” (ibid., p. 167)

Thus, “what the New Testament is, is the documentation of the religion of the incarnate Son and of the outpoured spirit, that is to say, of the religion of the Trinity, and what we mean by the doctrine of the Trinity is nothing but the formulation in exact language of the conception of God presupposed in the religion of the incarnate son and outpoured spirit.” (ibid., p. 168)

3.2.3.4. The New Testament’s Trinitarian Passages

Consider some of the passages where all three Persons of the Trinity are named together...

Matthew 3:16-17 says, “*And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*”

Matthew 28:19 says, “*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...*”

Corinthians 13:14 says, “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*”

1 Peter 1:2 says, “*according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood...*”

3.2.3.5. Statement of the Doctrine of the Trinity (summary from Berkhof’s *Systematic Theology*)

3.2.3.5.1. There is in the divine Being but one indivisible essence (*ousia, essentia*)

Scripture is abundantly clear that there is one and only one God. Furthermore, God is one in His essential being. Here is monotheism. And here the term “essence” is used to describe God as a sum-total of infinite perfections.

Deuteronomy 6:4 says, “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*”

1 Kings 8:60 records Solomon praying, “*that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other.*”

Isaiah 45:5-6 records God saying, “*I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.*”

Isaiah 44:6-8 God says, “*Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.*”

1 Timothy 2:5 likewise affirms there is but one God, saying, “*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*”

3.2.3.5.2. In this one divine Being there are three Persons or individual subsistences, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

While human experience enables us to perceive every person as a distinct and separate individual, in God there are no three individuals alongside of and separate from, one another, “but only personal self-distinctions within the Divine essence, which is not only generically, but also numerically, one.”

Here is a danger. When we think in terms of “person”, there is a tendency to bring in concepts of physical limitations that should not be thought of at all when pondering the Trinity.

The word *subsistence* helps here as it points with greater precision to the personal distinctions in the divine Being. White says, “We are talking about the “I, You, He” found in such passages as Matthew 3... While trying to avoid the idea of separate individuals, we are speaking of the personal self-distinctions God has revealed to exist within the one, indivisible divine essence.” (White, p.170)

Ponder the clear statement of John 1:1-2 where it says, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.*”

Jesus speaks to God the Father of the glory and love they shared from eternity past before the world was created in John 17:24.

Jesus as our High Priest, making eternal intercession for us, is a divine Person distinct from the Person of the divine Father Who sits upon the Throne. (Heb 7:25)

The distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit, as a divine Person, is clear from numerous passages where He teaches (John 14:26); bears witness (John 15:26); prays on behalf of us (Romans 8:26-27); gives gifts (1 Cor 12:11); is grieved (Ephesians 4:30), etc...

3.2.3.5.3. The whole undivided essence of God belongs equally to each of the three Persons

“This means that the divine essence is not divided among the three persons, but is wholly with all its perfection in each one of the persons, so that they have a numerical unity of essence. The divine nature is distinguished from the human nature in that it can subsist wholly and indivisibly in more than one person... The persons in the godhead have a numerical unity of essence, that is, possess the identical essence... The divine essence is not an independent existence alongside of the three persons. It has no existence outside of and apart from the three persons.” (*The Doctrine of God*, Berkhof, p.88)

“The person of the Father possesses the whole being of God in himself. Similarly, the son possesses the whole being of God in himself, and the Holy Spirit possesses the whole being of God in himself...” (*Systematic Theology*, Grudem, p.252)

Berkhof goes on to say, “It is especially when we reflect on the relation of the three persons to the divine essence that all analogies fail us and we become deeply conscious of the fact that the Trinity is a mystery far beyond our comprehension.” (p.88)

God the Father is clearly seen throughout Scripture as deity, beginning with the first verse.

God the Son is affirmed as God incarnate in John 1:1-14. God the Son was eternally fully God.

John 20:28 strongly affirms the deity of Christ when Thomas says, “*My Lord and my God!*” That Jesus neither rebukes nor corrects Thomas is striking given the clear Mosaic prohibition upon blasphemy.

Hebrews 1:3-8 strongly affirms that the Son is the “*exact representation*” (*charakter* – “exact duplicate”) of the nature or being (*hupostasis* – “substance”) of God. The teaching here is clear that God the Son exactly duplicates the “substance” of God the Father as God.

*“He is the radiance of the glory of God and **the exact imprint of his nature**, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...”* (ESV)

*“And He is the radiance of His glory and **the exact representation of His nature**, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...”* (NASV)

The Son “is the... *apaugasma* – “effulgence” or “radiance” (shining forth of a light from a luminous body)... of His *doxa*– “glory”... and the *charakter*– “exact image, precise reproduction in every respect”... of His *hupostasis* – “substance, being, exact nature”...”

The eighth verse continues to refer to the Son as “God” attributing the creation itself to the Son... “But of the Son He says, *“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” And, You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands.*”

God the Holy Spirit is clearly taught in numerous passages:

Psalm 139:7-8 – “*Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!*”

This passage clearly attributes to the Spirit the Divine attribute of omnipresence, a thing not attributed to any created being.

Acts 5:3-4 records Peter saying, “*Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.*”

“**The divine Being is one; the divine persons are three.** While the Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Spirit, each is fully and completely God by full and complete participation in the divine Being. Unless we recognize the difference between the terms *being* and *person*, we will never have an accurate or workable understanding of the Trinity.” (White, p.171)

3.2.3.5.4. The subsistence and operation of the three persons in the divine Being is marked by a certain definite order

“There is a certain order in the ontological Trinity. In personal subsistence the Father is first, the Son second, and the Holy Spirit third. This order does not pertain to a priority of time or dignity, but only to the logical order of derivation. The Father is neither begotten by, nor proceeds from any other person; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son from all eternity. Generation and procession take place within the Divine Being, and imply a certain subordination as to the manner of personal subsistence, but no subordination as far as the possession of the divine essence is concerned.” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.89)

Consider the difference, theologically, between two categories:

- (1) The ontological Trinity, &
- (2) The economical Trinity.

The ontological Trinity refers to the Trinity as it exists in and of itself.

The economical Trinity refers to the operations, workings & differing roles in both creation and redemption within the Trinity.

“We must be very careful to distinguish between relationships *as we observe them outwardly* and the eternal relationship that exists between the persons *inside* the triune nature of God, that is, the *ontological* Trinity.” (White, p.172)

This “certain definite order” is found in the continuous Scriptural statements describing the Father first, the Son second and the Spirit third.

But this has nothing to do with time elements or points of origin. We are not talking about an order of being or time or worth or divinity. The order described is that of relationship.

And to speak of the relationship within the Triune God is to use two primary terms of “*begotten*” and “*procession*”.

But *begotten* has nothing to do with origination. It speaks of an eternal relationship within the Godhead as Father & Son which has always been.

And the Scriptural method of describing the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son is this word “procession” & “sending”.

But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. (John 15:26)

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:7)

3.2.3.5.5. There are certain personal attributes by which the three Persons are distinguished

Though they are all works of the three Divine Persons jointly, creation is ascribed primarily to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit.

This is traditionally called the “economy of the Trinity”, or the different ways the three persons act as they relate to the world and each other for all eternity.

The Holy Trinity in the Creation:

It was God the Father Who spoke the words of power bringing the cosmos into existence...yet... (Genesis 1:1)

It was God the Son, Who carried out these creative decrees (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16& Heb 1).

It was God the Spirit, Who “hovered” over the face of the waters (Gen 1:2; Psa 33:6)

The Holy Trinity in Redemption:

God the Father planned redemption sending the Son into the world (John 3:16; Gal. 4:4; Eph 1:9-10).

God the Son obeyed the Father accomplishing redemption for us (Jn 6:38; Heb. 10:5-7).

Neither God the Father nor God the Holy Spirit died for our sins.

After God the Son sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High (Hebrews 1:3), God the Holy Spirit was sent being poured out on mankind (John 14:26; 16:7).

The work of the Holy Spirit seems to be to complete the redemptive work planned by God the Father and initially secured by God the Son.

The role of God the Father in both creation and redemption has been to plan and direct and send the Son and Holy Spirit.

“It shows us that the Father and the Son relate to one another as a father and son relate to one another in a human family; the father directs and has authority over the son, and the son obeys and is responsive to the directions of the father. The Holy Spirit is obedient to the directives of both the Father and the Son... Thus, while the persons of the Trinity are equal in all their attributes, they nonetheless differ in their relationships to the creation. The Son and Holy Spirit are equal in deity to God the Father, but they are subordinate in their roles. Moreover, these differences in role are not temporary but will last forever; Paul tells us that even after the final judgment, when the ‘last enemy,’ that is, death, is destroyed and when all things are put under Christ’s feet,” *“When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.”* (1 Cor 15:28; ESV; Grudem, p.248)

But the question might be asked, “Why?” **Why should the persons of the Trinity take these distinctive roles?** Was it arbitrary? Could God the Spirit have sent God the Father to die for our sins?

It appears clear that from all eternity the role of commanding, directing and sending applies to the role of the Father, after Whom all paternal relationships are patterned (Eph 3:14-15). Likewise the role of obeying, going as sent and revealing God is appropriate to the role of the Son, also called the Word of God. By extension, we conclude that the role of the Holy Spirit is one appropriate to the relationship he had with the Father and the Son from all eternity.

“This truth about the Trinity has sometimes been summarized in the phrase ‘*ontological equality but economic subordination*,’ where the word *ontological* means ‘being.’ Another way of expressing this more simply would be to say ‘*equal in being but subordinate in role*.’ Both parts of this phrase are necessary to a true doctrine of the Trinity. If we do not have ontological equality, not all the persons are fully God. But if we do not have economic subordination, then there is no inherent difference in the way the three persons relate to one another, and consequently we do not have the three distinct persons existing as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for all eternity. For example, if the Son is not eternally subordinate to the Father in role, then the Father is not eternally ‘Father’ and the Son is not eternally ‘Son.’ This would mean that the Trinity has not eternally existed.” (*Systematic Theology*, Grudem, p.251)

3.2.3.6. The Great Trinitarian Passage – Matthew 28:18-20

“He could not have been understood otherwise than as substituting for the Name of Jehovah this other Name ‘of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost’; and this could not possibly have meant to His disciples anything else than that Jehovah was now to be known to them by the new Name, of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The only alternative would have been that, for the community which He was founding, Jesus was supplanting Jehovah by a new God; and this alternative is no less than monstrous... We are not witnessing here the birth of the doctrine of the Trinity; that is

presupposed. *What we are witnessing is the authoritative announcement of the Trinity as the God of Christianity by its Founder, in one of the most solemn of His recorded declarations.* Israel had worshipped the one and only true God under the Name of Jehovah; Christians are to worship the same one and only and true God under the Name of ‘the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.’ This is the distinguishing characteristic of Christians; and that is as much as to say that *the doctrine of the Trinity is, according to our Lord’s own apprehension of it, the distinctive mark of the religion which He founded.*”

(B.B. Warfield, “The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity,” *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, Baker Book House, 1981, II:143)

3.2.3.7. Analogies: Useful but Limited

The three forms of water. But no quantity of water is ever all three of these at the same time. They also have differing properties. There is no corresponding part of the analogy to the 3rd affirmation that there is only one God. There is no such thing as “one water”. Finally, the element of personhood is lacking.

Human intellect, will and emotion. But no one of the factors constitutes the entire person. And the parts have differing abilities.

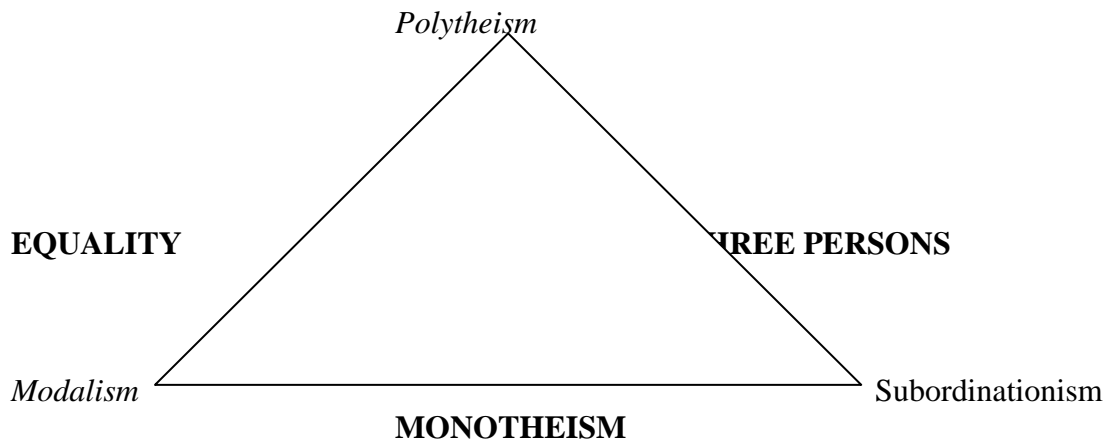
C.S. Lewis’s description of 2 dimensional beings encountered by a 3 dimensional being.

Scripture does not set forth an analogy from which to understand the Trinity.

3.2.3.8. The Triune Existence of God is both Eternal and Necessary

“If all three members of the Trinity are equally and fully divine, then they have all three existed for all eternity, and God has eternally existed as a Trinity (cf. also John 17:5, 24). Moreover, God cannot be other than he is, for He is unchanging...therefore it seems right to conclude that God necessarily exists as a Trinity – He cannot be other than He is.” (*Systematic Theology*, Grudem, p.241)

3.2.3.9. Denial of the Trinity results in heresy



There is only one God (Monotheism)

There are three Divine Persons

These three coeternal Persons are coequal (EQUALITY)

Denial of any one of these three biblical truths leads to serious error that has historically been identified as heresy.

Polytheism denies there is only one God.

Modalism & Arianism deny there are three Divine Persons.

Subordinationism denies that these three Persons are coequal & coeternal.

3.2.3.9.1. Modalism: A denial that God is three Persons, yet still embracing the full deity of Jesus

Historically this view was first set forth by Sabellius a theologian & priest in the third century.

Sabellianism, also called Modalism, denies the Trinity asserting that God is a single person who, throughout biblical history, has revealed Himself in three modes, or forms.

Thus, God is a single person who first manifested himself in the mode of the Father in Old Testament times. At the incarnation, the mode was the Son. After Jesus' ascension, the mode is the Holy Spirit. These modes are consecutive and never simultaneous. In other words, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit never all exist at the same time, only one after another.

Modalism thus denies the distinctiveness of the three persons in the Trinity yet retains the divinity of Christ.

Hermeneutical problems with Modalism

There are many passages of Scripture in which the Father, Son & Spirit are spoken of as being together & interacting together as three distinct Persons.

How is **the baptism of Jesus** to be understood?

*And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; **17** and behold, a voice from heaven said, “**This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.**”(Matthew 3:16-17)*

Cottrell accurately says, “If this is not one person speaking to another, then the narrative or even the act itself is deceptive.” (p.254).

And what of **the transfiguration**?

*And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, **3** and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. **4** And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. **5** And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” **6** For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. **7** And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “**This is my beloved Son; listen to him.**” **8** And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.*

Consider the prayers of Jesus...

So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”(John 11:41-42)

*And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. **24** Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. **25** Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **26** If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.**27** “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I have come to this hour. **28** Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” **29** The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” **30** Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. **31** Now is the judgment of this world; now will*

the ruler of this world be cast out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” (John 12:23-32)

*Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; **6** in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. **7** Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” **8** When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), **9** then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. **10** And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:5-10)*

Soteriological problems with Modalism

In what sense would Psalm 45 still ring true?

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions... (vss 6-7)

Hebrews chapter 1 uses this to establish the deity of God the Son and consequent superiority to the angels. But if they are not differing persons, one on God’s throne and the other anointing the One upon the throne, ought it not to have read, “Therefore You are anointing Yourself...”?

In what sense has God the Son taken His seat at the right hand of the majesty on high as Prophet, Priest & King?

After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...

Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven... (8:1)

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them... (7:25)

And what of the doctrine of the propitiatory death of God the Son? Remember that propitiation is a blood sacrifice that satisfies wrath. Thus the Scriptures read...

***24** ...and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25** whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. **26** It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:24-26)*

But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering... (Isaiah 53:10)

Modalism raises serious questions about the reality of God's work of redemption.

For in what sense did God the Son declare, *'a body Thou hast prepared for Me...I have come to do Thy will O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book...'* (Hebrews 10)

In what way are we to understand the entire soteriological concept of substitution as in Leviticus 17:11? For the parameters of substitution include God, as offended Deity, providing for Himself the perfect substitutionary Lamb, God the Son, "whom set forth did God for Himself as a propitiation in His blood..." (Romans 3). The entire soteriological infrastructure rests on God the Father, offering in sinner's place, God the Son as a blood sacrifice that satisfies wrath (propitiation; see also Isaiah 53).

Subsequent to His death & burial, God incarnate, as the 2nd Adam, and thus the new Federal Head, was presented before the Ancient of Days (Daniel 9). There He is given the kingdom. There He sits down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. There He in fully God & fully man, eternally, representing & interceding for sinners before a holy God as their Prophet, Priest & King.

If Modalism is correct, the very foundations our salvation rests upon are radically altered.

3.2.3.9.2. Arianism denies that God is three Persons, further denying the deity of Jesus

The term Arianism is derived from Arius, Bishop of Alexandria whose views the Council of Nicea condemned in A.D. 325.

Arius taught that God the Father created God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Arianism built its argument on texts that call Christ God's "only begotten" Son (John 1:14; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). Colossians 1:15 further calls Christ "the first-born of all creation". The argument here was that God the Son was obviously brought into existence by the Father.

But Colossians 1:15 is best understood to refer to the rights or privileges Christ has as "firstborn", not the idea of His being created, an idea flatly contradicted in Scripture at numerous points.

"As for the texts that say that Christ was God's 'only begotten Son,' the early church felt so strongly the force of many other texts showing that Christ was fully and completely God, that it concluded that, whatever 'only begotten' meant, it did not mean 'created.' Therefore the Nicene Creed in 325 affirmed that Christ was 'begotten, not made'" (*Systematic Theology*, Grudem, p.244)

The Nicene Creed

I 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 worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

(The Nicene Creed; A.D. 325; revised at Constantinople A.D. 381)

The controversy at Nicea can be identified by two Greek words: *homoiousios* (ἁμοιουσιος), meaning “of a similar substance,” and *homoousios* (ἁμοουσιος), meaning “of the same substance”; two words that differ by a single letter: iota. In fact, in his “History of Christianity,” Edward Gibbon pointed out, with some ridicule, that Christianity was nearly split by the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet.

Arius was content with a creedal statement affirming Christ as similar in substance to God the Father. **Athanasius**, bishop of Alexandria, however, argued and prevailed with the Council that the proper description of God the Son was *homoousios*, or “same substance” with the Father; “very God of very God...being of one substance with the Father.”

Two contemporary and prominent examples of the Arian heresy are **The Watchtower (Jehovah Witnesses)** and **Mormonism**. Jehovah Witness official teaching holds that Christ is Michael the created Archangel. Mormonism believes Him to be the first begotten spirit child of *Elohim* (God the Father), the literal brother of us all (and of Lucifer as well!).

The Athanasian Creed

1. *Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith:*
2. *Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.*
3. *And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;*
4. *Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Substance.*
5. *For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Spirit.*

6. *But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.*
7. *Such as the Father is; such is the Son; and such is the Holy Spirit.*
8. *The Father uncreated; the Son uncreated; and the Holy Spirit uncreated.*
9. *The Father incomprehensible; the Son incomprehensible; and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.*
10. *The Father eternal; the Son eternal; and the Holy Spirit eternal.*
11. *And yet they are not three eternal; but one eternal.*
12. *And also there are not three uncreated; nor three incomprehensibles, but one uncreated; and one incomprehensible.*
13. *So likewise the Father is Almighty; the Son Almighty; and the Holy Spirit Almighty.*
14. *And yet they are not three Almighties; but one Almighty. So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God.*
15. *So likewise the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Spirit is God.*
16. *And yet not three Gods; but one God.*
17. *So likewise the Father is Lord; the Son Lord; and the Holy Spirit Lord.*
18. *And yet not three Lords; but one Lord.*
19. *For we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord;*
20. *So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion; to say, 'There are three Gods, or three Lords.*
21. *The Father is made of none; neither created, nor begotten.*
22. *The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created; but begotten.*
23. *The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten; but proceeding.*
24. *So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.*
25. *And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another; none is greater, or less than another.*
26. *But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal.*
27. *So that in all things, as aforesaid; the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped.*
28. *He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.*
29. *Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation; that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
30. *For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess; that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;*
31. *God, of the Substance of the Father; begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world.*
32. *Perfect God: and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.*
33. *Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood.*
34. *Who although he be God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ.*
35. *One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by taking of the Manhood into God.*

36. *One altogether; not by confusion of Substance; but by unity of Person.*
37. *For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ;*
38. *Who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell; rose again the third day from the dead.*
39. *He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father God Almighty.*
40. *From when he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*
41. *At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;*
42. *And shall give account for their own works.*
43. *And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.*
44. *This is the Catholic Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.*

3.2.3.10. The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity

The atonement rests upon Jesus being fully God and fully man.

Justification by faith alone is undermined by a savior who is less than completely God, hence Divine and able to save without our works.

If Jesus is less than fully God, prayer and worship is eliminated to him.

If Christ, a created being, saved us, then we have attributed salvation to the creature rather than to the Creator.

If the Trinity is false the Independence and Personal nature of God are undermined.

The age old philosophical question of Unity vs. Diversity goes unresolved if there is not, from all eternity, perfect plurality of Persons amidst perfect Unity of Nature within the Holy Trinity.

[The above analysis from Grudem, p.247]

3.2.3.11. The role of Athanasius at the Council of Nicea

“Athanasius understood better than any of his contemporaries that Christianity stands or falls with the confession of the deity of Christ and of the trinity...The doctrine of the trinity is the very heart of Christianity, differentiating it in principle from Judaism, which denies the distinctions with the Divine Being, and from heathenism which rejects God’s unity...Accordingly, Athanasius completely avoids the philosophical intermingling of ontology and cosmology. He rejects the Gnostic and Arian dualism between God and the world together with all its intermediate beings... Athanasius maintains that the trinity is devoid of all foreign elements; that it is not a union of the Creator and the creature, trinity is eternal. In God there are no non-essential elements. God does not become anything; he is everything eternally. Just as the trinity is from

eternity so it is to eternity; hence, Father, Son, and Spirit are from eternity to eternity...” (*The Doctrine of God*, Bavinck, p.281-282)

3.2.3.12. The Church confesses the Trinity to be a mystery beyond man’s comprehension

“The Trinity is a mystery, not merely in the biblical sense that it is a truth, which was formerly hidden but is now revealed; but in the sense that man cannot comprehend it and make it intelligible. It is intelligible in some of its relations and modes of manifestation, but unintelligible in its essential nature. The many efforts that were made to explain the mystery were speculative rather than theological. They invariably resulted in the development of tritheistic or modalistic conceptions of God, in the denial of either the unity of the divine essence or the reality of the personal distinctions within the essence. The real difficulty lies in the relation in which the persons in the Godhead stand to the divine essence and to one another; and this is a difficulty which the Church cannot remove, but only try to reduce to its proper proportion by a proper definition of terms. It has never tried to explain the mystery of the Trinity, but only sought to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity in such a manner that the errors which endangered it were warded off.” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.89)

Holy, Holy, Holy

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessèd Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessèd Trinity!

Doxology

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!

Praise Him all creatures here below.

Praise Him above ye heavenly host.

Praise Father, Son & Holy Ghost. Amen.

“The Trinity”

Three in One, One in Three, God of my salvation, heavenly Father, blessed Son, eternal Spirit, I adore thee as one Being, one Essence, one God in three distinct Persons, for bringing sinners to thy knowledge and to thy kingdom.

O Father, thou hast loved me and sent Jesus to redeem me; O Jesus, thou hast loved me and assumed my nature, shed thine own blood to wash away my sins, wrought righteousness to cover my unworthiness; O Holy Spirit, thou hast loved me and entered my heart, implanted there eternal life, revealed to me the glories of Jesus.

Three Persons and one God, I bless and praise thee, for love so unmerited, so unspeakable, so wondrous, so mighty to save the lost and raise them to glory.

O Father, I thank thee that in fullness of grace thou hast given me to Jesus, to be his sheep, jewel, portion; O Jesus, I thank thee that in fullness of grace thou hast accepted, espoused, bound me; O Holy Spirit, I thank thee that in fullness of grace thou hast exhibited Jesus as my salvation, implanted faith with me, subdued my stubborn heart, made me one with him for ever.

O Father, thou art enthroned to hear my prayers, O Jesus, thy hand is outstretched to take my petitions, O Holy Spirit, thou art willing to help my infirmities, to show me my need, to supply words, to pray within me, to strengthen me that I faint not in supplication.

O Triune God, who commandeth the universe, thou hast commanded me to ask for those things that concern thy kingdom and my soul. Let me live and pray as one baptized into the threefold Name.

(The Valley of Vision, A collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions, Arthur Bennett, ed., 1975, pgs.2-3)

4. DOCTRINE OF MAN

4.1. Gender neutrality, political correctness and the *God-breathed* Scripture

There is a strong sentiment in our day that to use the word “man” to refer to the human race in general denigrates women. Those making this objection would prefer the use of only “gender neutral” terms such as “humanity,” “humankind,” “human beings,” or “persons” when referring to the human race.

One passage, however, provides what amounts to “Divine warrant” based not just on the precise usage of the God-breathed scripture, but upon the theological implications of such usage.

Genesis 5:1-2 says, “*This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.*”

The Hebrew term translated “Man” is *adam*, the same term used for the name of the first male, Adam, and the same term used to distinguish man from woman (Gen 2:22; 3:12).

“Therefore the practice of using the same term to refer (1) to male human beings and (2) to the human race generally is a practice that originated with God himself, and we should not find it objectionable or insensitive.” (*Systematic Theology*, Grudem, p.440)

It might be argued that this usage of the term was culturally limited within the context of the Hebrew language. This is false, however, in that God’s activity recorded in Genesis 5 is clearly that of choosing a name to apply to all of humanity.

“The theological issue is whether there is a suggestion of male leadership or headship in the family from the beginning of creation. The fact that God did not choose to call the human race “woman,” but “man,” probably has some significance for understanding God’s original plan for men and women.” (Grudem, p.440)

4.2. Scriptural Account of the Origin of Man

4.2.1. Scripture offers a twofold account of the creation of man (Gen 1 & 2)

There is no contradiction between the two accounts. Rather, the first contains the accounting of the creation of all things in broad chronological fashion. The second contains a grouping of things in relation to man indicating that the entirety of the created realm was prepared as a fit habitation for the crown of God’s creation.

4.2.2. Man’s creation was preceded by a solemn Divine counsel

“Then God said, “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.*”

4.2.3. The Creation of man was an immediate act of God

Note that the Scripture suggests what Berkhof calls a “mediate creation” in some sense. Consider the statements...

“Let the earthsprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” (Genesis 1:11)

“Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” (Genesis 1:20)

“Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” (Genesis 1:24)

“Whatever indication of mediacy in the work of creation is contained in the former expressions, is entirely wanting in the latter. Evidently the work of God in the creation of man was not mediated in any sense of the word.” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkhof, p.182)

The creation of man by God was precipitated by Divine consultation, acted upon by Divine Omnipotence and immediately executed. It was not a process.

4.2.4. Man was created after the Divine Image in distinction from the lower creatures

4.2.5. Scripture presents a twofold distinction in mankind’s nature

“Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” (Genesis 2:7; *ESV*)

Here the Scripture makes the first strong suggestion of what is elsewhere expressly taught. There is a two-fold nature to man. The two elements are the body and the breath or spirit of life breathed into it by God, and by the combination of the two man became a “living soul” (KJV).

“...and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.” (Eccl 12:7)

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ” (Matt 10:28)

“And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat.” (Luke 8:55)

“For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be

unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 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. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” (2 Cor 5:1-8)

“If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.” (Phil 1:22-24)

“The prevailing representation of the nature of man in Scripture is clearly *dichotomic*.” (Systematic Theology, Berkhof, p.192)

“This view is technically called *dichotomy*. Alongside of it, however, another made its appearance, to the effect that human nature consists of three parts, body, soul, and spirit. It is designated by the term *trichotomy*. The tri-partite conception of man originated in Greek philosophy...” (Berkhof, p.191)

A thorough study of Scripture indicates that taken as a whole, the testimony of Sacred Scripture is to a dualistic view of mankind: body and spirit, or, body and soul; with soul and spirit being used synonymously.

4.2.6. Man is immediately placed in an exalted position

Man is represented in Scripture as standing, immediately, at the apex of all the created world, crowned as king of the “lower creation” and given the “Dominion Mandate” to subdue the earth. Again, man’s position in the world is not one achieved through a process.

“And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” (Genesis 1:28)

“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (Psalms 8:3-8)

4.2.7. This Age's Account of the Origin of Man – Evolution

The fundamental and underlying assumption of Darwinian Evolution: Man descended from the lower animals through a process of natural selection and irrational forces. Strict continuity between the animal world and man is assumed.

Problems with the theory

The theory is contrary to the explicit teachings of Holy Scripture in some fundamental ways

1. The Bible could hardly teach more clearly than it does that man is the product of a direct and special creative act of God, rather than of a process of development out of the simian stock of animals. It asserts that God formed man out of the dust of the ground..." (Berkhof, p.184)
2. Observe that the Scripture teaches a clear distinction between the "flesh" of man and that of all animals: *"For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish."* (1 Cor 15:39)
3. "Furthermore, Scripture also teaches that man was at once separated from the lower creation by an enormous chasm. He at once stood on a high intellectual, moral, and religious level, as created in the image of God and was given dominion over the lower creation." (Berkhof, p.184)

By the fall into sin, however, man lost his high position and became subject to a process of degeneration and corruption.

"This is quite the opposite of what the evolutionary hypothesis teaches us. According to it man stood on the lower level at the beginning of his career, but slightly removed from the brute, and has been rising to high levels ever since." (Berkhof, p.185)

From goo to you by way of the zoo. – Frank Peretti

Evolutionary theory, then, asserts a movement from lesser to greater, from more primitive to more advanced. Scripture asserts a movement from greater to lesser, from more advanced to more primitive.

4.3. Scriptural theology of the Creation of Man

4.3.1. God did not need to create man, yet created us for His own glory

4.3.2. What is the chief purpose of man?

The Westminster Catechism asks: What is chief and highest end of man? *"Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever."*

The normal experience of a Christian is rejoicing in the Lord and in the lessons He teaches on life's path. (Rom 5:2-3; Phil 4:4; 1 Thess 5:16-18; et al.)

4.3.3. Man in the Image of God

4.3.3.1. The meaning of "*the image of God*"

"The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God." (Grudem, p.442) The question is "how"?

When God said, "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*" (Gen 1:26), He meant "Let us make man to be like us and to represent us." (Grudem, p.443)

4.3.3.2. The Fall: God's image distorted & corrupted but not lost

Did The Fall of man involve a complete loss of the image of God? No.

After the flood, God gave specific commands to Noah and his descendants saying, "*Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image*" (Genesis 9:6)

With The Fall mankind descended into sin, corrupting his standing before God's Law (no longer righteous; Romans 3:10), his morals (no longer holy; Isaiah 6:5; Romans 1:24) and his knowledge (darkened in his understanding; Romans 1:21).

4.3.3.3. The three-fold functions of the soul

Here the Three Transcendentals give us our best clue to understanding the fullness of the *imageo deo*.

Truth, Goodness & Beauty are mirrored in man by **Cognition, Volition & Affection**. Man is thus rational, capable of & called upon to make true choices that are fundamentally contingent and has an imagination capable of creativity.

It is in both the pursuit of & denial of the Three Transcendentals that man reveals himself to be made in the image of God. For only man is drawn inexorably toward things eternal; drawn toward His Maker. Ponder further the reality that mankind represents the culmination of God's infinitely wise and powerful action in creation. Ponder that of all created things, both animate and inanimate, the Creator of heaven and earth has chosen to become like unto only one "kind"; mankind. Furthermore, redemption has been secured and offered to only mankind; not to the fallen angelic realm.

Truly there is something far deeper than we realize when we ponder the meaning of being made in God's image.

4.3.4. Man as Male and Female

4.3.4.1. Harmonious interpersonal relationships are God's eternal experience and His intentional creation design for mankind

“Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...” (Ephesians 5:24,25)

“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:24-26)

4.3.4.2. Equality in Personhood and importance of each

4.3.4.3. Yet with differences in Roles

Ponder the interpersonal relationships within the Trinity, from eternity past, and the God-designed male/female relationship in marriage.

“But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.” (1 Cor 11:3)

Distinct roles existed before The Fall

- Adam was created first; then Eve (1 Timothy 2:13)
- Eve was created as a helper for Adam (Gen 2:18; 1 Cor 11:9)
- Adam named Eve (Gen 2:19-20)
- God named the human race “Man”, not “Woman” (Gen 5:2)
- The serpent came to Eve first (Gen 3:1)
- God called Adam to account first after The Fall (Gen 2:15-17)
- Adam, not Eve, represented the human race (1 Cor 15:22; Rom 5:15)
- The curse brought a distortion of previous roles, not the introduction of new ones
- Redemption in Christ reaffirms the Creation order

[The above a summary of Grudem chapter 22]

4.3.4.4. Biblical Masculinity (MacArthur, Think Biblically, ch 8)

4.3.4.5. Biblical Femininity (MacArthur, Think Biblically, ch 9)

5. SIN

“The plain truth is that a right knowledge of sin lies at the root of all saving Christianity. Without it such doctrines as justification, conversion, sanctification, are ‘words and names’ which convey no meaning to the mind. The first thing, therefore, that God does when He makes any one a new creature in Christ is to send light into his heart, and show him that he is a guilty sinner. The material creation in Genesis began with ‘light,’ and so also does the spiritual creation. God ‘shines into our hearts’ by the work of the Holy Ghost, and then spiritual life begins (2 Cor. 4:6). Dim or indistinct views of sin are the origin of most of the errors, heresies, and false doctrines of the present day. If a man does not realize the dangerous nature of his soul’s disease, you cannot wonder if he is content with false or imperfect remedies. I believe that one of the chief wants of the Church in the nineteenth century has been, and is, clearer, fuller teaching about sin.” (Holiness, J.C. Ryle, 1877, p.1)

5.1. The Definition of Sin

Romans 1:1 – 3:20

One of the fundamental New Testament treatises on sin is found in Romans 1:18 – 3:20). Here the Spirit of God breaths out Holy Writ revealing that sin begins with a suppression of truth in which truth is exchanged for a lie. This then is tightly followed by failure to honor God & be thankful to His Divine Majesty for all things (1:18-21).

This quickly descends into violation of commandments I – IV as man’s relationship with his Maker is corrupted (1:21-22)

Thereupon follows violation of commandments V – X, as the dishonor of God’s authority is further manifested in dishonor of the father’s authority (commandment V), and again as a soul clutching at that which is not rightful, thus manifesting itself in anger/murder (commandment VI), lust/adultery (commandment VII), envy/theft (commandment VIII), & malice/deceit (commandment IX), all of which have, at their root & core, the violation of God’s Immutability, as it ought to be dimly seen in mankind in the form of contentment. Hence, covetousness, prohibited by the 10th commandment, is the very negation of contentment and rests at the root of commandments VI through IX (Romans 11:23-32).

Stunning & sweeping then, the God-breathed climax of this Divine condemnation against all mankind in the 3rd chapter. “*For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.’*” (Romans 3:9-20; ESV)

“Sin is a violation of law, God’s law. It is a violation of the category of *ought*; it is wrong; it ought not to be.” (*Collected Writings of John Murray, Vol. 2 - Select Lectures in Systematic Theology*, p.77)

Sin is not simply unwise, inexpedient, hurtful, painful, calamitous or unfortunate. It ought not to be. It violates God’s law; God’s nature.

Succinct then the *God-breathed* statement: “*Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.*” (1 John 3:4; ESV)

A 1592 Creedal Summary

“It is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.”(1592 Anglican Ninth Article of Religion)

5.2. The theology behind the Hebrew triadic “sin, iniquity & transgression”

There is a frequently appearing grouping of three Hebrew words that seem to suggest a comprehensive description of the overall category known in theology as “sin”.

The three Hebrew words are *chata* (2398), *avown* (5771) & *pesha* (6588). The KJV, NKJV, NASV & ESV all consistently translate these with the English words “sin”, “iniquity” & “transgression”. The NIV is not consistent in its translation. This will be shown shortly. Consider the following passages from the ESV.

Psalm 32:1-2 “*How blessed is he whose transgression (6588) is forgiven, whose sin (2401 from 2398) is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity (5771), and in whose spirit there is no deceit!*”(NASV)

Psalm 32:5 “*I acknowledged my sin(2401) to you, and I did not cover my iniquity(5771); I said, “I will confess my transgressions (6588) to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity(5771) of my sin(2401).*(NASV)

Psalm 51:1-2 “*Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions (6588). Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity (5771) and cleanse me from my sin (2401).*” (NASV)

Psalm 103:10-12 “*He has not dealt with us according to our sins(2401), nor rewarded us according to our iniquities(5771). For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions(6588) from us.*” (NASV)

Daniel 9:24 “*Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression (6588), to put an end to sin (2401) and to stone for iniquity (5771), to bring in everlasting righteousness...*” (NASV)

5.2.1. Consider the meaning of *chata* (2398) & *chatta*(2401)

Here is the most important word for sin in the Old Testament occurring about 580 times. It is very similar to the Greek *hamartano* (264). It means to come short of the goal; to be off target; to fall short of God's standard. It can be a breach of civil law (Genesis 40:11), or a serious breakdown in a personal relationship (Judges 11:27). Consider Romans 3:23... Here is the image of an arrow in flight hitting wide of the bulls-eye. Whether deliberate choice or secondary effect from previous choices, the individual bears the blame; the guilt.

5.2.2. Consider the meaning of *pesha* (6588)

Here is a revolt or refusal to be in subjection to rightful authority. It is a willful & cognitively thought out transgression of law. It is a willfully rebellious & premeditated crossing of an established line.

Pesha is "the technical term for willful deviation from the path of righteousness (see Amos 2:4; *Thus says the LORD, for three transgressions (6588) of Judah and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because they rejected the law of the LORD...*)

Here is a premeditated crossing of the line of God's law. It is a willfully rebellious pre-mediated acting out.

Whereas the primary sense of *chata* is that of missing the mark, the primary sense of *pesha* is more sinister. It is a willful & 'thought through' trespass.

5.2.3. Consider the meaning of *avown* (5771)

Here is a depraved action; a perversity. Here is the crooked behavior, an infraction of moral law.

The noun, *Avown* (5771; *au-vone*) is derived from *Avah* (5753) which means "to crook, to be bent, to writhe; to act perversely, to be perverse, to distort or twist, to turn upside down, to make crooked. Here is the twisting of the sinner's inner nature. Observe the collective nature of iniquity in Genesis 15:16.

While the primary focus of the first two words, *chata&pesha* is upon the outward action, the focus of *avown* is upon the inner consequence of the choices made.

5.2.4. Theologically here are the two fangs of sin: Guilt & Corruption

Sin brings two consequences to the sinner. The first is his standing in relation to God's Law. He is guilty. Legally he is under condemnation. And while the first consequence is horrific enough the second is more sinister.

Not only is he guilty outwardly in relation to God's Law, he is also now inwardly bent or twisted. He is corrupted, polluted, stained & impure.

The old hymn *Rock of Ages* captures the theology well when it says, "**Be of sin the double cure. Save from wrath & make me pure.**"

The *wrath* the hymn speaks of is related to our guilt before God's Law. The pronouncement of justification upon the sinner, whereby God declares the sinner "just" because the sinner is now clothed in a "God-righteousness from Christ (Isaiah 61:10), solves this forensic or legal problem of guilt.

The *being made pure* the hymn speaks of is the ministration of the indwelling Holy Spirit Who calls, the now saved sinner, to holiness. Here is the God-designed method of dealing with the inner corruption & twisted nature which the Hebrew word **iniquity** describes.

The first problem of sin, "guilt", is solved by Justification; being legally declared "just" by God. The second problem of sin, inner corruption or perversion of nature, is solved by Sanctification.

The distinction may be seen in the difference between a sinner asking, "*Forgive Thou my sin,*" and "*God be merciful to me the sinner!*"

Finally, *avown* is the truth behind the proverb that says, "**We become our choices.**"

5.2.5. Consider the New Testament's theological parallels

Romans 1 & 3

Ponder the movement of thought in Romans 1:18-31. Here clear downward spiral of sin is depicted.

Observe the initial sins of not honoring God nor giving thanks. Observe the '*missing of the mark*' nature of these sins as they became fools rather than wise. Observe the replacement of God worship with man worship (verses 18-23)

Note the three frightful pronouncements: *Therefore God gave them over or up*

God gives them over to dishonored bodies (vss 24-25)

God then gives them over to degrading or vile passions (vss. 26-27)

Finally God gives them over to depraved or debased minds (vs. 28-32)

Consider again the specific naming of sins & transgressions in this 1st chapter.

Now consider the listing of sin in chapter 3. "*As it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. 13 Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. 14 Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 in their paths are ruin and*

misery, 17 and the way of peace they have not known. 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Do you see the shift; the change from the listing of the 1st chapter? Chapter 1 identifies specific deeds, actions as well as attitudes. Chapter 3 does not. Chapter 3 speaks more to what the man is inside than what he does outside. Chapter 3 is fundamentally portraying what iniquity looks like.

Ephesians 2:1-3

*And you were dead in the **trespasses** and **sins** 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were **by nature children of wrath**, like the rest of mankind.*

Here again we see the echo of the Hebrew Hebrew terms and their meanings:

Chata (sin; O.T.) = *sins* (Eph 2)

Pesha (transgression; O.T.) = *trespasses* (Eph 2)

Avown (iniquity; O.T.) = *by nature children of wrath* (Eph 2)

5.2.6. The Hebrew Triad and the Virgin Birth

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity (5771) and transgression (6588) and sin (2403), but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity (5771) of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation. (Exodus 34:6-7)

Ponder what we are told here. God, in His mercy & grace, will forgive *avown*, *pasha* & *chata*. But, there is a consequence to sin. And here specifically named, despite the legal forgiveness is the consequent of visiting the *avown* of the fathers on the children to the 4th generation.

Observe that only *avown* is passed on or visited generationally.

Observe the specific statement that it is the *avown* of the father; not the mother.

Observe that, whereas the first two words, *chata* & *pasha*, involve guilt, given their outward focus on specific behavior, *avown* speaks not so much of outward action as the inner corruption or bentness that takes place in partial result of the outward action.

Now ask the question, ‘Why was the virgin birth necessary?’ Fundamentally, a key part of the answer is that being born as a man, He could not have the *avown* of a biological father visited upon Him.

For the 2nd Person of the Holy Trinity to join Himself with human flesh and become man, He had to come and clothe Himself in the veil of flesh called humanity. God had to join Himself with flesh in a God chosen womb for that which was to be born to be both man & God.

Because it is through our earthly fathers that *avown* (iniquity; depravity) is passed, and not through the mother, thus the virgin birth was necessary.

Jesus, born of a woman, did not have the iniquity of Adam & every other father in His blood-line visited to Him. The absolute purity & holiness of Deity thus clothed itself with absolutely pure, holy & unstained by *avown* humanity.

The theological necessity of the virgin birth hinges on the theology behind Exodus 34. What some theological systems call Original Sin was not passed on to Jesus. Thus He came as the 2nd Adam from above, His flesh made in the same purity and holiness as the first Adam’s had been.

5.2.7. The Hebrew Triad & the Doctrines of Redemption

Observe the legal, forensic nature of Exodus 34’s pronouncement of “forgiveness”. And yet, there is a visiting of iniquity, despite the forgiveness.

The Doctrine of Justification is the grand doctrine of being pronounced just because a God-righteousness has been wrapped around us; the righteousness of Christ.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness... (Isaiah 61:10)

Yet, the New Testament teaches there is still a problem of sin within. Thus the Doctrine of Sanctification is the grand doctrine of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit as He first quickens us and then daily shapes us into Christ’s image by putting to death the old man and his deeds.

The visiting of the *avown* (iniquity) is answered redemptively by sanctification.

5.2.8. The Hebrew Triad of Exodus 34 & sound translations

Comparison of translations of Exodus 34:7

King James Version (KJV)

“Keeping (5341) mercy (2617) for thousands, forgiving (5375) iniquity (5771) and transgression (6588) and sin (2403), and that will by no means clear the guilty (5352); visiting (6485) the iniquity (5771) of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

“Who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

English Standard Version (ESV)

“Keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

New International Version (NIV)

“Maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”

New Living Translation (NLT)

“I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren; the entire family is affected — even children in the third and fourth generations.”

Observe that the KJV, NKJV, NASV & ESV all consistently agree on their translations of the three Hebrew words for sin here.

Observe that the NIV equivocates in the passage. The first time it encounters *avown* it translates it as “wickedness”. The second time it encounters *avown* it translates it as “sin”. Thus the NIV translation of Exodus 34:7 creates the following errors:

- (1) God punishes children for their father's sin; and that to the 3rd & 4th generation.
- (2) A key part of the doctrine behind the Virgin Birth is gutted.
- (3) A key link of the Old Testament's understanding of sin & its relation to the doctrines of justification & sanctification is gutted.
- (4) Exodus 34 contradicts Ezekiel 18; in the New International Version.

5.3. Sin is anything less than absolute perfection

“The slightest outward or inward departure from absolute mathematical parallelism with God's revealed will and character constitutes a sin, and at once makes us guilty in God's sight.” (Ryle, p.2)

“There are an infinite number of angles at which one may fall, but only one angle at which one can stand straight.” – G.K. Chesterton

“You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48) Does Jesus mean what He said? Is God’s standard of what constitutes sin this severe?

5.4. Sin begins in the imagination.

Hence, the mind, the spirit, the heart of man. The Divine Voice distantly, from 3 millennia ago, thunders the command, *“Keep thy heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs [issues] of life.”* (Proverbs 4:23)

Did not Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21-28) settle the point that a man may not commit an outward visible act of wickedness, yet within his heart, within the thoughts of his imagination, still violate God’s law.

Consider the lyrics to Casting Crowns *“Slow Fade”*

Be careful little eyes what you see
It's the second glance that ties your hands as darkness pulls the strings
Be careful little feet where you go
For it's the little feet behind you that are sure to follow

It's a slow fade when you give yourself away
It's a slow fade when black and white have turned to gray
Thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid
When you give yourself away
People never crumble in a day
It's a slow fade, it's a slow fade

Be careful little ears what you hear
When flattery leads to compromise, the end is always near
Be careful little lips what you say
For empty words and promises lead broken hearts astray

It's a slow fade when you give yourself away
It's a slow fade when black and white have turned to gray
Thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid
When you give yourself away
People never crumble in a day

The journey from your mind to your hands
Is shorter than you're thinking
Be careful if you think you stand
You just might be sinking

It's a slow fade when you give yourself away
It's a slow fade when black and white have turned to gray
Thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid
When you give yourself away
People never crumble in a day
Daddies never crumble in a day
Families never crumble in a day

Oh be careful little eyes what see
Oh be careful little eyes what you see
For the Father up above is looking down in love
Oh be careful little eyes what you see

5.5. Sin includes both things committed & omitted

Sin includes not just those things we ought not to do, but also those things we ought to do and don't. Sins of Commission and Sins of Omission.

Does not James 4:17 say, "*Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*"

Do not the "goats" stand condemned for their *failure to do good deeds* in the parable of the Sheep & the Goats? (Mathew 25)

"Lord, forgive me all my sins, and specially my sins of omission." (Archbishop Usher just before his death)

5.6. Sin may, then, be committed out of ignorance

The 4th & 5th chapters of Leviticus and the 15th of Numbers distinctly teach the existence of sins of ignorance which bring uncleanness needful of atonement. (Leviticus 4:1-35; 5:14-19; Numbers 15:25-29)

Christ's own words expressly teach this: "*But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating.*" A light beating but a beating nevertheless. (Luke 12:48)

"We shall do well to remember that when we make our own miserably imperfect knowledge and consciousness the measure of our sinfulness, we are on very dangerous ground. A deeper study of Leviticus might do us much good." (Ryle, p.3)

Furthermore, the very category of sins of omission establishes the potential of sinning with complete ignorance of it. For who among us has a clue as to what course our life would have taken had not early veered from the path of complete obedience! Even more, the older I live, the less I live out what was designed for me in His "perfect will"; that will of God's that

would have been had I never sinned. The mountain of what should have been, and is not, grows exponentially with every passing year.

5.7. The Scriptural doctrine of sin is the antidote to that fuzzy and hazy theology so prevalent in our day

Think seriously on Ryle's charge, in his day, "that there is a vast quantity of so-called Christianity nowadays which you cannot declare positively unsound, but which, nevertheless, is not full measure, good weight, and sixteen ounces to the pound." (p.12)

"It neither exercises influence on daily conduct, nor comforts in life, nor gives peace in death; and those who hold it, often awake too late to find that they have got nothing solid under their feet. Now I believe the likeliest way to cure and mend this defective kind of religion is to bring forward more prominently the old scriptural truth about the sinfulness of sin. People will never set their faces decidedly towards heaven, and live like pilgrims, until they really feel that they are in danger of hell." (p.12)

What, my friend, does your religion do for you? Make you feel cuddly and warm and filled? Or does it lead, yes, drive you to your knees to cry out daily for mercy?

5.8. The Scriptural doctrine of sin is the antidote to liberal theology in our day

There is a relativism that has settled in our day across the theological landscape. Do not judge is the all important directive. Everybody is right and nobody wrong. Everyone who dies goes to heaven. Besides there is no hell. For what kind of a God would torment people in hellfire for all eternity?

"The atonement and substitution of Christ, the personality of the devil, the miraculous element in Scripture, the reality and eternity of future punishment, all these mighty foundation-stones are coolly tossed overboard, like lumber, in order to lighten the ship of Christianity, and enable it to keep pace with modern science." (Ryle, p.13)

But Ryle raises an existential challenge: "We must...demand a plain answer to some plain questions. We must ask them to lay their hands on their hearts, and tell us whether their favorite opinions comfort them in the day of sickness, in the hour of death, by the bedside of dying parents, by the grave of beloved wife or child. We must ask them whether a vague earnestness, without definite doctrine, gives them peace at seasons like these." (p.13)

My experience in hospice, after 550 patients & their families vividly revealed to me the utter bankruptcy of Liberal Theology in the face of pain, suffering and death. So frequently, in discussions about the afterlife, and their hope of something there, something better, I would be asked, "But, it's not like anyone has been there and come back to tell us about it, is it?"

In like manner, Ravi Zacharias charges atheism with bankruptcy when it comes to helping people who are in the "**passages of life**".

My friend, what is needed, is some knife-edge doctrinal expositions of sin, guilt and corruption. And after this, we must tell them to they will not find rest until there is “submission to the old doctrines of man’s ruin, and Christ’s redemption, and simple childlike faith in Jesus.” (p.14)

5.9. The Scriptural doctrine of sin is the antidote to the low view of personal holiness

Dear friend, ponder the words over a century ago by Ryle. “This is a very painful and delicate subject, I know; but I dare not turn away from it. It has long been my sorrowful conviction that the standard of daily life among professing Christians in this country has been gradually falling. I am afraid that Christ-like charity, kindness, good-temper, unselfishness, meekness, gentleness, good-nature, self-denial, zeal to do good, and separation from the world are far less appreciated than they ought to be, and than they used to be in the days of our fathers.” (Holiness, Ryle, p.15-16)

That assessment, my friend, was written in 1867

Ryle suggests that “a certain profession of religion has become so fashionable and comparatively easy in the present age that the streams which were once narrow and deep have become wide and shallow, and what we have gained in outward show we have lost in quality!” (p.16)

Who grieves over their sin? Who contemplates a closer walk in holiness this year than last? This month than last? We must realize that it is frightfully possible to live a careless, easy-going, half-worldly life, all the while professing to be evangelical Christians.

“Just in proportion as we realize how much Christ has done for us, shall we labor to do much for Christ. Much forgiven, we shall love much.” (p.17)

My friend, I am convinced that the Church today needs to more fully realize the stunning sinfulness of man. This drives us to the Savior.

5.10. The Origin of Sin

5.10.1. “Since by man came death...”

The question of Original Sin revolves around the Biblical teaching concerning the Fall of Man in Genesis 3.

That the sin of Adam & Eve resulted in immediate and devastating consequences is undeniable. Furthermore, the freefall into depravity of the generations that immediately followed should startle and somber every thinking Christian.

Cain, the firstborn, murders his brother Abel. Cain then consciously departs from the presence of God and journeys east. But five generations later we have polygamy and a descent into such murderous anger, following Cain’s footsteps, that Lamech boasts, “I

have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold.” (Genesis 4:23, 24)

Further stunning is the rapid collapse of all godliness until God says, “enough”, in the days of Noah.

Is Genesis 6 causally connected to Genesis 3? The connection is obvious. But how are we to understand this “cause & effect” relationship between Adam’s sin and the depth of depravity mankind sank into so quickly?

Romans 5:12-21 establishes the principle of Federal Headship as it describes the far-reaching and devastating effects of Adam’s sin.

*“(12) Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned - (13) for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. (14) Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. (15) But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. (16) The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. (17) For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. (18) **So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.** (19) For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. (20) The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (21) so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 5:12-21; NASV)*

Clear it is that in Adam, something happened that has affected all mankind. The question is “what is that effect and how far-reaching was it?”

5.10.2. Historic Theological Positions (from Cottrell, chapter 9)

Semi-Pelagianism – This is the view of the early church from Irenaeus (2nd Century) up until Augustine (latter 4th Century). This view holds that Adam’s sin had a partial spiritual effect upon all mankind. This effect may be described as “bentness” or “proneness” to evil. Yet, the will is not in bondage and is thus able to respond to God. Children are conceived and born innocent; free from guilt and resultant condemnation.

Augustinian Calvinism – This is the view first championed by Augustine (4th Century) and during the Reformation by Calvin. This view holds that Adam’s sin had a complete effect of total corruption; by which is meant not that we are as bad as we could be, but that the whole person has been corrupted. This includes the will, hence “bondage of the will”. It includes also the categories of guilt and resultant condemnation to hell unless God sovereignly intervenes with unconditional grace.

Pelagianism – In opposition to Augustine, Pelagius, a contemporary, held that Adam’s sin had no direct causal effect upon all mankind. Children are conceived and born without any guilt or effect spiritually from Adam.

Roman Catholicism – The view of Rome affirms freedom of the will, and hence only a partial depravity. However, all inherit a state of guilt and condemnation from Adam. *Paedo*-Baptism is therefore required.

5.10.3. Guilt, Depravity & Bondage of the Will

Consider the definition offered by John MacArthur: “*Original sin* is the biblical doctrine that explains your child’s sinful proclivity. It means children do not come into the world seeking God and righteousness. They do not even come into the world with a neutral innocence. They come into the world seeking the fulfillment of sinful and selfish desires. Scripture also teaches a doctrine called *total depravity*, referring to the extent of original sin. Although the outworking of the sin nature does not necessarily attain full expression in everyone’s behavior, it is nonetheless called *total* depravity because there is no aspect of the human personality, character, mind, emotions, or will that is free from the corruption of sin or immune to sin’s enticements.”

Original sin is typically understood to include three components: **Guilt, Depravity and Bondage of the Will.**

- (1) **Guilt** speaks of our legal standing before God’s Law.
- (2) **Depravity** speaks of the inner corruption or pollution sin brings.

Total Depravity teaches that man’s entire being is corrupted; not that he is as corrupted as possible, but that the whole of man has been corrupted including His volition; his will.

Bondage of the Will falls under the category of Total Depravity. Simply put, Calvinism teaches a Total Depravity which includes the will, rendering man incapable of anything good, including a response of faith.

If Bondage of the Will is accepted as the Scriptural teaching, then there are only two theological paradigms capable of explaining salvation.

The first paradigm is that **God sovereignly chooses** who He will provide regeneration to thus unconditionally choosing and irresistibly calling the sinner to grace. Here is the “U” and “I” of traditional Calvinism; Unconditional Election & Irresistible Grace.

The second paradigm is that **God sovereignly enables** man to respond in faith, the choice being up to each individual. This enabling, before the salvation choice is made, is called **prevenient grace**.

The concept of prevenient grace is that divine grace which precedes human decision. It exists prior to and without reference to anything humans may have done. Prevenient grace allows persons to engage their God-created free will to choose or reject the salvation sovereignly offered by God in Christ Jesus.

Thus God effectually overcomes the bondage of the will imputed to us by Adam’s sin, thus preserving the sacred gift to mankind of freewill with its corresponding culpability for the choices made.

5.10.4. Prevenient Grace...Original Grace?

Dr. Cottrell sets this position forward in Chapter 9 of his book, essentially identifying Prevenient Grace as *Original Grace*.

In contrast, R.C. Sproul asserts, “The \$64,000 question is, ‘Does the Bible teach such a doctrine of prevenient grace? If so, where?’” (“Does the Bible teach prevenient grace?”, R.C. Sproul, from *Chosen by God*) Sproul’s conclusion is, “no.”

But consider just some passages which appear to do this very thing:

Titus 2:11 - “*The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.*” (NASV)

Romans 5:18 - “*So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.*” (NASV)

Observe the phrase twice repeated in Romans 5:18: “*to all men*”. The Calvinist position is that Adam’s “all” and Christ’s “all” are two different things. That is the group to which Adam relates is all mankind, while the group to which Christ relates is just the Elect. But is this equivocal understanding of the same phrase, the same terms justified?

“The common approach is that, when these terms are used in relation to Adam’s sin, they are completely universal in scope; but when they are used in relation to the work of Christ, they are more limited and restricted in scope and do not really mean ‘all.’” (*The Faith Once For All*, Cottrell, p.186-187)

Reformed Theology has historically understood the Biblical passages to mean that a total depravity was imputed to all as a direct causal result of Adam's sin. Calvinism then asserts, that given the nature of total depravity, God must sovereignly elect those he will regenerate and thus save.

Classical Arminianism, while maintaining God's sovereignty, posits that the Scriptural data is best understood as God preveniently gracing all, restoring the capacity to respond in faith, restoring the capacity to have true volitional freedom. This prevenient grace comes to all as a direct causal result of Christ's one act of righteousness.

It is critical to note that in this discussion, "Classical Arminianism" is understood to be that doctrinal position put forth by Jacobus Arminius himself. Hence, it is often called "Reformed Arminianism" indicating it's clear distancing from what today is called Arminianism. This will be dealt with in greater detail under the Doctrine of Salvation.

Calvinism asserts such a stance violates God's sovereignty. It asserts that God's sovereignty is such that Election cannot be on the basis of a foreknowing who would respond in faith. But who is limiting God's sovereignty? The Classical Arminian embraces the Biblical teaching of God's sovereignty, insisting that it is upheld and reinforced by His sovereign choice to preveniently grace all mankind, thus gifting man with the genuine capacity to choose either unbelief or Biblical faith.

In this case, it would seem, that the Classical Arminian stance asserts that God is free in His sovereignty, while the Calvinist stance denies God's ability to make such a choice.

Cottrell suggests that this passage may actually teach an Original Grace; referred to in Systematic Theology as Prevenient Grace. What we lost in Adam, we preveniently regained in Christ, on the basis of His eternally foreordained sacrifice & resurrection. Thus sinners are enabled, preveniently, to make a morally responsible and free choice to either obey or reject the Gospel message.

Calvinism, therefore, embraces a view of Original Sin that includes Guilt, Total Depravity & Bondage of the Will. God chooses Who He will elect and enable with the gift of faith.

Semi-Pelagianism (the view of the early Church) with regard to the effect of Adam's sin, denies both Guilt and Bondage of the Will, while accepting a Partial Depravity.

Classical Arminianism, the view of Jacobus Arminius himself, holds to a view of Original Sin that denies Guilt, while affirming Total Depravity, yet on the basis of a "prevenient grace" affirming the ability of the sinner to respond in faith.

6. DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

6.1. The Person of Christ: Fully God, Fully Man

6.1.1. The Humanity of Christ

6.1.1.1. The Virgin Birth

“She was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit” (Matt 1:18)

“That which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” (Matt 1:20)

“And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35)

The Virgin Birth reveals that salvation must come from the Lord. The fulfillment of the promise concerning the “seed of the woman” would not come through human effort, initiative or power.

The Virgin Birth was God’s chosen method for the uniting of full deity with full humanity in one person.

The Virgin Birth made possible Christ’s true humanity without the effect of Adam’s sin; original sin however one defines it. Exodus 34:7... And if depravity (iniquity) is passed through the father, then lacking a biological father, Christ would not have inherited depravity from the first Adam.

6.1.1.2. Human Weaknesses and Limitations

Jesus had a human body - He was physically born, grew in stature, experienced weariness, thirst, hunger and physical pain. His ascension clearly demonstrated the continuity between His physical bodily existence after His resurrection and the ongoing reality of that even in heaven.

Jesus had a human mind - He increased in wisdom and learned obedience through the things He suffered. Part of the state of Humiliation included a forfeiture of omniscience (Mark 13:32).

Jesus had a human soul with emotions – His soul was troubled (Jn 12:27); His spirit troubled (Jn 12:27). He spoke of His soul being very sorrowful, even to death (Matt 26:38). He wept. The fact that He faced temptation (Heb 4:15), means He was genuinely human, for Scripture clearly teaches that “God cannot be tempted by evil.” (James 1:13)

Matthew 13:53-58 reveals that Jesus appeared to many as merely a very good man, who could work miracles and make remarkable claims.

6.1.1.3. Sinlessness

Jesus lived out His life as Adam and Eve had lived theirs before the fruit of the Tree.

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor 5:21)

Hebrews refers to Jesus as being *“tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (4:15)*

Observe the exhaustive nature, as in fully covering all parts of vulnerability, of the three-fold temptation of Christ:

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.” (Gen 3:6)

“If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread... If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down... All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” (Matt 4)

“For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.” (1 John 2:16)

6.1.1.4. Why was Jesus’ full humanity necessary?

For representative obedience as the Second Adam

*“Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so **by the one man's obedience** the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:18-19)*

*But in fact **Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.** 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: **Christ the firstfruits**, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all...*

Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man

of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 45-49)

Here “the ascension of Christ is declared to be the presentation of the ‘first-fruits’ of the new humanity to God the Father...” (*The Foundations of Social Order*, Rushdoony, p.164)

But, observe, the intermediary role Christ the God-man, the 2nd Adam, our representative Federal Head plays between the saved and God the Father! Two divine Persons. One Who is leading reclaimed humanity back to the Other, Himself having partaken of, having been made a man, now to appear before the Majesty on High as their Prophet, Priest & King.

To be a substitutionary Sacrifice

Ponder deeply the eternal truths revealed in Genesis 22, as God requires of Abraham’s hand the slaying of his son Isaac. And yet, God intervenes at the killing stone, and provides substitutionary blood.

Abraham prophesies and Moses echoes the words, *God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son... The LORD will provide... On the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.*

Christ Jesus, Whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood... (Romans 3:24-25; “a blood sacrifice that satisfies Divine wrath”)

Isaiah foresaw saying, But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief, if He would render Himself as a guilt offering. (Isaiah 53:10)

The Covenant of Redemption rooted in eternity past (Heb 10)

A body you have prepared for Me (vs.5)

I have come to do your will O God (vs.7, 9)

By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (vs.10)

But this man, after He had offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God (vs.12)

To be the one Mediator between God and men

“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Tim 2:5)

Observe the necessity of the Divine Son mediating, on sinners behalf, before the Divine Father. Observe again that the very concept of mediation necessarily involves two Divine Persons; one mediating & one being mediated.

To be our example and pattern in life

“Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.” (1 John 2:6)

To be the first-born from the dead

“He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.” (Col 1:18)

Here is primary reference to His being the 2nd Adam, mankind’s newly recognized & accepted by God the Father Head representing them before the Majesty on High; God the Father.

To sympathize as our High Priest

Observe the three fold offices of Christ

As Prophet He represents God to man

As Priest He represents man to God

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb 4:15)

“For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” (Heb 2:16-17)

6.1.1.5. Jesus will be the God-man forever

He did not give up His humanity after His death and resurrection.

In John’s vision, Jesus appears as *“one like a son of man.”* (Rev 1:13; see also Daniel 7)

Jesus will continue forever in His offices as Prophet, Priest and King, all of them carried out by virtue of the reality that He is both God and man forever. Thus *He is able to save to the uttermost...* (Heb 7:21-28)

6.1.2. The Deity of Christ

Direct Scriptural Claims (John 1:1, 18 in older and better manuscripts; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8 (quoting Psalm 45:6); 2 Peter 1:1 and Isaiah 9:6)

6.1.2.1. The name Lord Jesus Christ

“Throughout the New Testament, we find there are three names in primary usage for the Son of God: Jesus, Christ, and Lord. The name Jesus, meaning ‘Jehovah saves,’ is His human name, linking Him with humanity whom He came to save. Christ, meaning ‘anointed,’ is His Messianic name, linking Him with the prophecy which He came to fulfill. The New Testament equivalent to the Hebrew word ‘Jehovah’ is the word ‘Lord,’ linking Him with deity whom He came to represent and reveal, and to whom is due homage.

In fact, this Greek word *kyrios*, was used in the Septuagint as a translation for the Hebrew *YHWH* 6814x. Any Greek-speaking Jew would have recognized that the New Testament application of *Kyrios* to Jesus was the equivalent of calling Him Jehovah God!

These three names have a chronological emphasis, for until His crucifixion, He was known primarily as “Jesus,” but after His resurrection and ascension, He was preeminent as “Christ,” When He returns, it will be as “Lord” to reign.

The three names also indicate His three-fold office and work. “Jesus” suggests His career as a prophet, teaching men the truth, while “Christ” suggests His priesthood, atoning for sin, and “Lord” His kingship, ruling over men. Mankind’s relationship and proper response to Him follows this same pattern: obedience to Him as Prophet, faith in Him as priest, surrender to Him as King.

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ!” (Acts 2:36; above a summary from Days of Praise devotional, June 15, 2011)

6.1.2.2. Other strong claims to Deity

“Before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:24 & 58)

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” (Revel 22:13)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1, 14)

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb 1:3)

6.1.2.3. Why was Jesus' Deity necessary?

Only 'One Who was infinite' could bear the full wrath of God for all the sins, for all eternity. Observe the redemptive necessity, of the offended Deity being appeased by the Deity being sacrificed in sinner's place.

The clear testimony of Scripture is that only God can save: "*And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me.*" (Isaiah 45:21)

Only One Who was fully God and fully man could be the one mediator between God and man, both to bring us back to God and to reveal God most fully to us. (1 Tim 2:5; John 14:9)

6.2. The States of Christ: His Humiliation & Exaltation

6.2.1. The State of Humiliation

But made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:7-8)

Various stages of His humiliation...

The Incarnation and Birth of Christ

"It was not the triune God but the second person of the Trinity that assumed human nature. For that reason it is better to say that the Word became flesh than that God became man." (Berkhof, p.333)

The Sufferings of the Savior

The Death of the Savior

The Burial of the Savior

The Savior's Death

"On the whole it seems best to combine two thoughts: (a) that Christ suffered the pangs of hell before His death, in Gethsemane and on the cross; and (b) that he entered the deepest humiliation of the state of death." (Berkhof, p.342-343)

6.2.2. The State of Exaltation

6.2.2.1. Christ's Resurrection

"It consisted rather in this that in Him human nature, both body and soul, was restored to its pristine strength and perfection and even raised to a higher level, while body and soul were re-united in a living organism. From the analogy of the change which, according to Scripture, takes place in the body of believers on the general resurrection, we may gather

something as to the transformation that must have occurred in Christ. Paul tell us in I Cor 15:42-44 that the future body of believers will be incorruptible, that is, incapable of decay; glorious, which means resplendent with heavenly brightness; powerful, that is, instinct with energy and perhaps with new faculties; and spiritual, which does not mean immaterial or ethereal, but adapted to the spirit, a perfect instrument of the spirit.” (Berkhof, p.346)

The Resurrection constituted a declaration of the Father that the last enemy had been vanquished, the penalty paid, and the condition on which life was promised, met.

The Resurrection symbolized what was destined to happen to the members of Christ’s mystical body in our justification, spiritual birth, and future blessed resurrection, Rom. 6:4, 5, 9; 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:20-22; 2 Cor 4:10, 11, 14; Col 2:12; I Thess 4:14.

The Resurrection is connected in an instrumental manner with our justification, regeneration and final resurrection, Rom 4:25; 5:10; Eph 1:20; Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 1:3.

In total distinction from others raised from the dead, Christ arose through His own power! John 10:18. Yet the resurrection was not Christ’s work alone, but is frequently ascribed to the power of God in general, Acts 2:24, 32, Eph 1:20, or more particularly, to the Father, Rom 6:4; Gal 1:1; 1 Pet 1:3.

6.2.2.2. Christ’s Ascension

While not as seemingly noteworthy as the Resurrection, Scripture does call attention to its significance frequently

The ascension was the visible movement of Christ from earth to heaven in the presence of disciples.

It occurred 40 days after His resurrection on the Mount of Olives (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:1-11)

He was received and sat down at the right hand of God...

See also Daniel 7....

This event was predicted in the Psalms and by Christ Himself.

You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there. Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation. (Psalm 68:18-19)

For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? (Jn 6:55-62)

And raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6)

He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. (Eph 4:10)

Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him (1 Peter 3:22)

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. (1Timothy 3:16)

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 6:19-20)

We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God. (Hebrews 4:14)

For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself. (Hebrews 9:24)

The Ascension embodied the declaration that the sacrifice of Christ was a sacrifice to God, which as such had to be presented to Him in the inner sanctuary; that the Father regarded the Mediatorial work of Christ as sufficient and therefore admitted Him to the heavenly glory; and that the Kingdom of the Mediator was not a kingdom of the Jews, but a universal kingdom.

The Ascension was prophetic of the ascension of all believers, who already abide in Christ in heavenly places and destined to be with Him forever.

The Ascension was instrumental in preparing a place for those who are in Christ. Jesus Himself pointed to the necessity of going to prepare a place for them.

“Prior to the incarnation, men of faith saw God’s hand in history and accepted it, but their sense of desolation and loneliness was expressed by David in Psalm 22; that isolation was experienced to the uttermost by Christ on the cross, and it was ended by His ascension and session. Man now is restored to communion with God in Christ, and the communion is closer than that of Eden. Man in the person of Jesus Christ sits in session with the triune God, in warfare against evil and in judgment over it...

The ascension of Christ is declared to be the presentation of the first-fruits of the new humanity to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:22-23)

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

The first of everything belonged to God, according to the Law, to indicate that all things, men, animals, crops, were His in their totality. The first-fruits therefore represented the symbolic dedication of the entire fruit. Moreover, ‘If the first-fruits were holy, the lump was also holy’ (Rom 11:16), i.e., the entirety partakes of the character of the representative.

Christ is the first-fruit of the new creation, of the new humanity created by God; He is the second and last Adam (1 Cor. 15:47-49)... In the ascension, the whole body of the elect is presented to the Father, holy in the first-fruit, Jesus Christ. In the session, the whole body of the elect is present at the right hand of God the Father, declaring war on the ungodly and seeking redress for the evils they have suffered. That victory which the elect seek is assured by the Ascension, ‘which marks the reversal of man’s verdict upon Jesus of Nazareth by the verdict of God.’” (Rushdoony, p.164-165)

6.2.2.3. Christ’s Session at the right hand of God

“The doctrine of the Session is the perpetual presence of our Lord’s human nature in the highest glory of heaven, at the right hand of God the Father. The body of Jesus Christ is thus locally and physically present in heaven, and hence it is the Holy Spirit whom He sends to men. The result of this exaltation of the Session is that it brings the redeemed to God, into the divine presence, in closest communion. It made possible the exaltation of all the saints into the communion of heaven, ‘that where I am, there ye may be also’ (John 14:2, 3). The Session is repeatedly cited in the Gospels and Epistles, but Mark’s story of the ascension is unique in citing the Session in that context (Mark 16:19)” (Rushdoony, p. 163)

So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

“To be seated at the right hand is to be seated in the position of trust and power; Pearson wrote that ‘the right hand of God signifies the glorious majesty of God.’ It is ‘the right hand of power’ (Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69). Among its many meanings, it means ‘the right hand of judicature,’ so that Christ is thereby ‘manifested and declared to be the great judge of the quick and the dead.’ It is Christ’s inheritance, in its full promised meaning, of the throne of David (Acts 2:36). Both temporal and spiritual enemies shall be made His ‘footstool’ (Heb. 10:12; 13). According to Pearson, ‘For the destruction of these powers was Christ exalted to the right hand of God, and by his regal office doth he subdue and destroy them all.’ Christ destroys the power of sin in His saints, and He subjugates the reprobate to His absolute power eternally. Death also is destroyed by Christ (1 Cor. 15:20). ‘Enemies we all have been; under his feet we shall be, either adopted or subdued.’ There is not limitation to Christ’s power. The session ‘signifieth an omnipotent power, able to do all things without any limitation.’” (Rushdoony, p.167)

“God, having created man in His image, offered man the position of vice-regent under God over creation. Man sought this same position in autonomy from God and in rebellion against God. God in Christ re-established man, restored him to grace, and opened afresh by the re-creation of man in Christ man’s glorious destiny... The divine Session is the sole and total omnipotence and government of the Trinity over all creation. Man is given a favored position in the divine session, a position made possible by grace and received by the total submission and obedience of Jesus Christ. Man’s own exaltation in the eternal kingdom involves his own perfect sanctification after death. The government is God’s, not man’s, and man’s position in perfect obedience is that of a vice-regent, not that of God.” (Rushdoony, p. 168)

When Christ stood before the high priest he predicted that He would sit at the right hand of the power. *“From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”* (Matthew 26:64)

Ponder Rushdoony’s closing words on the Session of Christ...

“Unless the ascension and session of Jesus Christ be confessed, men will seek their own ascension into omnipotence and their own session of absolute power over man. For a man to confess Christ and to espouse statism or socialism is to involve himself in serious contradiction and the practical denial of Christ. The divine Session and the statist, socialist session are mutually exclusive and incompatible. Calvin said of the ascension and session, that it meant that Christ was ‘inaugurated in the government of heaven and earth.’ The essence of the humanistic and socialist state is that it is the enthronement of man into the government of heaven and earth. The consequence is warfare against God and Christ. There is no victory possible for men who wage war against God. But neither is there any hope for men, who, in the direct line of fire, fail to see that a war is on.” (p.170)

Seated at the right hand of God, Christ in His Session, rules as Prophet, Priest & King.

6.2.2.4. Christ’s physical return

The pinnacle of Christ’s Session is not reached until He who suffered at the hands of man, returns in the capacity of Judge.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” (2 Cor 5:10)

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom.” (2 Tim 4:1)

“Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.” (James 5:9)

The second coming of Jesus Christ will be for the purpose of judging the world and perfecting the salvation of His people. Man and angels, the living and the dead, will appear before Him to be judged.

6.3. The Offices of Christ: Prophet, Priest & King

“As Prophet He represents God with man; as Priest He represents man in the presence of God, and as King He exercises dominion and restores the original dominion of man.” (Berkhof, p.357)

“The prophet is one who sees things, that is, who receives revelations, who is in the service of God, particularly as a messenger, and who speaks in His name.” (Berkhof, p.358)

6.3.1. Christ as our Prophet

Christ exercised His prophetic office as the Angel of Jehovah in the O.T.

Christ exercised His prophetic office in His Incarnation as He both taught and exemplified God’s will. (John 13:15; Phil 2:5; 1 Pet 2:22)

Christ exercises His prophetic office now through the indwelling Spirit of God and the Holy Scripture.

Christ was predicted as a Prophet

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen.” (Deut 18:15; Acts 3:22-23)

6.3.2. Christ as our High Priest

6.3.2.1. The Scriptural Idea of a Priest

Scripture makes a broad and important distinction between a prophet and a priest. Both receive their appointment from God, but the prophet is God’s representative to the people. He was primarily a religious teacher. The priest, on the other hand, was man’s representative with God.

The functions of a priest from Heb 5:1 were that he was taken from men to be their representative; he was appointed by God; he was active in religious things and while his special work was to offer gifts and sacrifice for sins, he also made intercession for the people (Heb 7:25), and blessed them in the name of God, (Lev 9:22).

The Old Testament pointed to the priesthood of the coming Redeemer.

“It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” (Zech 6:13)

In the New Testament, only Hebrews calls Jesus a priest explicitly, yet many other N.T. passages refer to His priestly work. (Hebrews 3:1; 4:14; 5:5; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1)

6.3.2.2. The sacrificial work of Christ symbolized and typified in the Mosaic sacrifices.

They were expiatory and vicarious in nature. This is to say, that they were piacular in nature [Definition of “piacular” - *atonning for sin: done or offered in order to make up for a sin or sacrilegious action*].

This piacular nature of the Mosaic sacrifices “was most prominent in the sin and trespass-offerings, less prominent in the burnt-offering, and least in evidence in the peace-offerings.” (Berkhof, p.364)

The Mosaic sacrifices had spiritual and typical significance. They prefigured the vicarious sufferings of Christ and His atoning death.

Christ is called “*The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29).

1 Corinthians 5:7 says, “*Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.*”

6.3.2.3. Scripture presents Christ as both priest and sacrifice!

“The priestly work of Christ is most clearly represented in the epistle to the Hebrews, where the Mediator is described as our only real, eternal, and perfect High Priest, appointed by God, who takes our place vicariously, and by His self-sacrifice obtains a real and perfect redemption, Heb 5:1-10; 7:1-28; 9:11-15, 24-28; 10:11-14, 19-22; 12:24, and particularly the following verses, 5:5; 7:26; 9:14.” (Berkhof, p.366)

A body hast Thou prepared for me... (Hebrews 10)

Thou art a Priest forever according to the order of... (Hebrews 7)

6.3.2.4. Christ’s sacrifice of atonement

The Atonement was motivated by the will and good pleasure of God the Father toward sinners.

*“For in him all the fullness of God was **pleased to dwell**, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”* (Col 1:19)

*“Who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, **according to the will of our God and Father.**”* (Gal 1:4)

*“Justified by his grace **as a gift**, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”* (Romans 3:24,25)

If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his

people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.
(Leviticus 17:10-11)

It is a method entirely gratuitous. The only condition given is faith, founded upon the redemption secured by Christ which reconciled two eternal attributes within God; His wrath and His mercy.

This mystery of God now revealed rightly humbles men and lays foundation for the global reign of Christ through His Church by the most unimaginable establishment and fulfillment of the Law!

God Himself satisfies the demands of His wrath on sin by pouring it out in full of God the Son, as the Father smites the Son. Stunning! My LORD, what love is this that pays so dearly

Ponder these words by John Flavel (1628-1691) who wrote on the Covenant of Redemption

“How reasonable it is that believers should embrace the hardest terms of obedience unto Christ, who complied with such hard terms for their salvation: they were hard and difficult terms indeed, on which Christ received you from the Father’s hand: it was, as you have heard, to pour out his soul unto death, or not to enjoy a soul of you. Here you may suppose the Father to say, when driving his bargain with Christ for you:

Father: *My Son, here is a company of poor miserable souls, that have utterly undone themselves, and now lie open to my justice! Justice demands satisfaction for them, or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them. What shall be done for these souls?*

And thus Christ returns...

Son: *O my Father, such is my love to, and pity for them, that rather than they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them as their Surety; bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe thee; Lord, bring them all in, that there may be no after-reckonings with them; at my hand shalt thou require it. I will rather choose to suffer thy wrath than they should suffer it: upon my, my Father, upon me be all their debt.*

Father: *But, my Son, if thou undertake for them, thou must reckon to pay the last mite. Expect no abatements. If I spare them, I will not spare thee.*

Son: *Content, Father, let it be so. Charge it all upon me. I am able to discharge it, and though it prove a kind of undoing to me, though it impoverish all my riches, empty all my treasures, (for so indeed it did, 2 Cor 8:9), “though He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor”, yet I am content to undertake it.*

Blush, ungrateful believers. O let shame cover your faces. Judge in yourselves now: has Christ deserved that you should stand him for trifles, that you should shrink at a few petty difficulties, and complain, this is hard, and that is harsh? O if you knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in this His wonderful condescension for you, you could not do it.”

The Atonement allowed God to be both Just and the Justifier

“Justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:24-26)

The Atonement was absolutely necessary for God to both pardon sinners and satisfy Divine justice.

“God, in virtue of His divine righteousness and holiness, cannot simply overlook defiance to His infinite majesty, but must needs visit sin with punishment.” (Berkhof, p.370)

The immutability of the Divine Law as based on God’s very nature made penal retribution on the sinner a necessity.

Furthermore, the veracity of God demanded that the penalty be executed, “and if sinners were to be saved, should be executed in the life of a substitute.”

Finally, “The amazing greatness of the sacrifice which God Himself provided also implies the necessity of the atonement...’This sacrifice would be most painfully irrelevant if it were anything short of absolutely necessary in relation to the end designed to be attained’ – that is, unless it be indeed the only possible means to the salvation of sinful man. God surely would not have made His Son a wanton sacrifice to a bare point of will.” (Berkhof, quoting Dr. A.A. Hodge, p.371)

God the Father is propitiated by God the Son Who propitiates.
God the Father inflicts retributive wrath on God the Son Who suffers it.
God the Father exacts the debt we owed from God the Son Who pays it.
Amazing Love...

The Atonement was a Vicarious Atonement

“If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.” (Lev 1:4)

“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.” (Isaiah 53:6, 12)

6.3.2.5. The Intercessory Work of Christ

“He [Christ] holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” (Heb 7:25)

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1)

“For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.” (Heb 9:24)

“Briefly, we can also say that Christ pleads our cause with God, while the Holy Spirit pleads God’s cause with us.” (Berkhof, p.401)

The perpetual presence of the completed sacrifice of Christ before God, in the person of God the Son, contains an element of intercession as a constant and eternal reminder of the perfect atonement He has accomplished once for all.

“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant.” (Heb 13:20)

He stands as an eternal bulwark against any ground of accusation being leveled at us!

“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.” (Romans 8:33, 34)

His High Priestly prayer of John 17 suggests strongly, the ongoing and eternal nature of Christ’s prayer for us at the right hand of God the Father.

6.3.3. Christ as our King

Christ’s Kingship is presently a spiritual kingship

My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world. (John 18:36)

His Kingship is spiritual at this time, in that it relates to the salvation of His people and is administered by the Word and Holy Spirit, in the gathering of the Church, in its government, protection and sanctification.

Christ's Kingship involves absolute rights & power of rulership

Power? He is the omnipotent God in the flesh.

Rights? He is the Maker & Redeemer...

But furthermore, He is now, through His sacrificial death & resurrection, recognized by God the Father as the 2nd Adam, redeemed mankind's Federal Head.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Matt 28:18)

"And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come..." (Revel 12:10)

The Crown Rights of King Jesus

Observe, neither the Administration of God at large, nor the Church is a democracy.

The notion of majority rule is as fundamentally antithetical to the Crown Rights of King Jesus as the notion of every man doing what is right in his own eyes is.

Nowhere is man given the right of voting on the command of God.

Indeed, the question before the American Church today, with its emphasis on individualism and majority rule is, *"How do the Crown Rights of Christ Jesus the sovereign King interface with the Church that bears His Name?"*

Zechariah 6 records a fascinating description of the joining of two offices in the person of the Messiah.

Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. 12 And say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. 13 It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."' 14 *And the crown shall be in the temple of the LORD as a reminder.*

A fundamental problem and sin in the Church today is a dividing between the Priest and the King.

Too much of the Church today wants the benefits of Christ as High Priest; benefits such as forgiveness, grace, mercy, peace, intercession. But that is all she wants. She does not want a King; much less a King with absolute dictatorial rights.

For the Crown rights of Christ our King are absolute fealty, loyalty, obedience, subservience, etc...

How do the Crown Rights of Christ Jesus our King interface with the Church that bears His Name?

The crown rights of Christ Jesus extend every bit as far as His Priestly blood covering does. The offices of King & Priest as ultimately fulfilled in Christ shall not be divided between.

If Christ Jesus is your Prophet & High Priest, then He is also thy sovereign King with crown rights over you and your church.

Ponder the full implications of a simple Greek word used 6x in the New Testament to describe the Lord God's rightful position over us

Despotes (#1203); Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24; 2 Timothy 2:21; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 1:4 & Revelation 6:10.

Christ will be recognized as King by all in the imminent future

“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil 2:9-11)

*“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, **King of kings and Lord of lords.**”* (Revel 19:11-16)

“O Father of Jesus, help me to approach thee with deepest reverence, not with presumption, not with servile fear, but with holy boldness. Thou art beyond the grasp of my understanding, but not beyond that of my love. Thou knowest that I love thee supremely, for thou art supremely adorable, good, perfect.

My heart melts at the love of Jesus, my brother, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, married to me, dead for me, rise for me; He is mine and I am his, given to me as well as for me; I am never so much mine as when I am his, or so much lost to myself until lost in him; then I find my true manhood.

But my love is frost and cold, ice and snow; let his love warm me, lighten my burden, be my heaven; may it be more revealed to me in all its influences that my love to him may be more fervent and glowing; let the mighty tide of his everlasting love cover the rocks of my sin and care; then let my spirit float above those things which had else wrecked my life.

Make me fruitful by living to that love, my character becoming more beautiful every day. If traces of Christ’s love-artistry be upon me, may he work on with his divine brush until the complete image be obtained and I be made a perfect copy of him, my Master.

O Lord Jesus, come to me,
O Divine Spirit, rest upon me,
O Holy Father, look on me in mercy for the sake of the well-beloved.”

(The Valley of Vision, “The Love of Jesus”, p. 44-45)

7. DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

7.1. His Name

While John 4:24 tells us that God is Spirit, this name is specifically applied to the third person in the Trinity.

The Hebrew term is *ruach*, and the Greek *pneuma*. Both are derived from roots which mean “to breathe.” Hence the terms can be used to designate “breath”.

The Old Testament typically uses only the term “Spirit”, or speaks of “the Spirit of God” or “of the Lord”. It uses the term “Holy Spirit” only in Psalm 51:11 and Isaiah 63:10, 11.

“Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.” (Psalm 51:11)

“But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit...” (Isaiah 63:10, 11)

The New Testament far more frequently uses this phrase; some 92 times.

Berkhof offers the following insight...

“It is a striking fact that, while the Old Testament repeatedly calls God “the Holy One of Israel,” Ps. 71:22; 89:18; Isa. 10:20; 4:14; 43:3; 48:17, the New Testament seldom applies the adjective “holy” to God in general, but uses it frequently to characterize the Spirit. This is in all probability due to the fact that it was especially in the Spirit and His sanctifying work that God revealed Himself as the Holy One. It is the Holy Spirit that takes up His abode in the hearts of believers, that separates them unto God, and that cleanses them from sin.” (Berkhof, p.95)

7.2. The Personality of the Holy Spirit

Because the terms “Spirit of God” and “Holy Spirit” do not implicitly suggest personality as does the term “Son”, the full personality of the Holy Spirit was often called into question both in the early church and even to this day. But Holy Scripture abounds with passages clearly attributing real personality to the Spirit of God.

Designations that are proper to personality are given to Him.

John applies the name *Parakletos* to Him saying, *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you”*; *“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me”*; *“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go*

away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” (John 14:26; 15:26 & 16:7)

That the full personhood of God the Spirit was meant is seen by the fact “that the Holy Spirit as Comforter is placed in juxtaposition with Christ as the Comforter about to depart, to whom the same term is applied in 1 John 2:1.” (Berkhof, p.96)

The Characteristics of a person are ascribed to Him

Intelligence

John 14:26; 15:26; Romans 8:16

Will

Acts 16:7; 1 Cor. 12:11

Affections – Isaiah 63:10; Eph 4:30

He searches, speaks, testifies, commands, reveals, strives, creates, makes intercession, raises the dead, etc... (Gen 1:2; 6:3; Luke 12:12; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8; Acts 8:29; 13:2; Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 2:10, 11)

Berkhof says, “What does all these things cannot be a mere power or influence, but must be a person.” (p.96)

He is represented as standing in such relations to other persons as imply His own personality.

He is placed in juxtaposition with the apostles...

“For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements...” (Acts 15:28)

He is placed in juxtaposition with Christ...

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:13 & 14)

He is placed in juxtaposition with the Father and the Son...

“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...” (Matt 28:19)

“According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:” (1 Peter 1:2)

“But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” (Jude 20, 21)

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Cor 13:14)

Berkhof accurately states, “Sound exegesis requires that in these passages the Holy Spirit be regarded as a person.” (p.96)

There are passages in which the Holy Spirit is distinguished from His own power

“And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35)

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” (Acts 10:38)

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” (Rom 15:13)

“And my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor 2:4)

Again Berkhof’s analysis is helpful; “Such passages would become tautological, meaningless, and even absurd, if they were interpreted on the principle that the Holy Spirit is merely a power. This can be shown by substituting for the name “Holy Spirit” such a word as “power” or “influence.” (p.96)

7.3. The Relation of the Holy Spirit to the other Person in the Trinity

“The Spirit is God as the immanent principle of life in all creation. He is called ‘Holy’ (Spirit) because he himself bears a peculiar relation to God, and because he determines the distinctive relation between God and all existing objects... As breath proceeds from our mouths, so the Spirit proceeds from God and preserves every creature.” (The Doctrine of God, Bavinck, p.272)

This procession of the Holy Spirit is indicated by means of various expressions in Scripture.

He is given by God or by Christ (Num 11:29; Isa 42:1; John 3:34)...

He is sent or sent forth (Ps 104:30; John 14:26; Gal 4:6)...

He is poured out or poured forth (Is 32:15; 44:3; Acts 2:17, 18)...

He descends from God (Matt 3:16)...

He is breathed on a person (John 20:22)...

But John 15:26 tells us that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father”. The Day of Pentecost was a special manifestation of just that.

Hence, while the Son is sent by the Father, the Holy Spirit proceeds forth from the Son and from the Father.

“The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.” (Line 23 of *The Athanasian Creed*)

7.4. The Deity of the Holy Spirit

Divine Names are given to Him

“But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” (Acts 5:3,4)

“Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Cor 3:16)

“And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?” (Ex 17:7)

“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works.’ (Heb 3:7-9)

Divine Perfections are ascribed to Him

Omnipresence

“Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.” (Psalm 139:7-10)

Omniscience

“Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?” (Isaiah 40:13, 14)

Omnipotence

“All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.” (1 Cor 12:11)

“By the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ.” (Romans 15:19)

Eternality

“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” (Hebrews 9:14)

Divine Works are performed by Him

Creation

“The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” (Job 33:4)

Providential Renovation

“When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.” (Psalms 104:30)

Regeneration

“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” (Titus 3:5)

The Resurrection of the dead

“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” (Romans 8:11)

Divine Honour is paid to Him

“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...” (Matt 28:19)

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Cor 13:14)

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Divine Economy

There are particular works which tend to be more often ascribed to the Holy Spirit in both the general economy of God and the special economy of redemption.

The particular task of the Holy Spirit is “to bring things to completion by acting immediately upon and in the creature. Just as He Himself is the person who completes the Trinity, so His work is the completion of God’s contact with His creatures and the consummation of the work of God in every sphere. It follows the work of the Son, just as the work of the Son follows that of the Father.” (Berkhof, p.98)

The Holy Spirit’s work in the Natural Sphere

The giving of life in creation and providential sustenance

“As *being* is out of the Father, and *thought* through the Son, so *life* is mediated by the Spirit... In that respect He puts the finishing touch to the work of creation.” (Berkhof, p98)

“*The Spirit of God has made me, and **the breath of the Almighty gives me life.***” (Job 33:4)

“*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.*” (Psalm 33:6)

“*When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.*” (Psalm 104:30)

“*When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? **It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.***” (John 6:60-63)

“*If **the Spirit** of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead **will also give life to your mortal bodies** through his Spirit who dwells in you.*” (Romans 8:11)

“*For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will **from the Spirit reap eternal life.***” (Galatians 6:8)

The skill equipping of mankind

“*You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood.*” (Exodus 28:3)

“*See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship.*” (Ex 31:2-3)

“*He has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a*

designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of workman or skilled designer.” (Exodus 35:34-35)

“Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.” (1 Samuel 16:13)

“To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.” (1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

7.5. The Holy Spirit’s Work in the sphere of Redemption

The preparation & qualification of Christ for His mediatorial work

“And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35)

“Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me...’ (Hebrews 10:5)

“And the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22)

The Inspiration & Inscripturation of Holy Scripture

“And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.” (1 Cor 2:13)

“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21)

“All Scripture is breathed out by God...” (2 Tim 3:16)

John 14-16...

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” (John 14:26)

““But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.” (John 15:26)

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things

that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”
(John 16:13-14)

**Here are the foundational passages describing the Holy Spirit’s role in the *breathing out* ,
the oversight & formation of the canon of Scripture.**

The formation of the Church

“In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”
(Ephesians 2:22)

“Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Cor
3:16)

*“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; **5** and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.”* (2 Cor 12:4-11)

Teaching & guiding the Church

8. DOCTRINE OF THE FUTURE

8.1. Introduction to Eschatology

The Name & Focus of “Eschatology”

The term “eschatology” is based on those passages of Scripture that speak of “the last days” (*eschatai hemerai*; Isa 2:2; Micah 4:1), “the last time” (*eschatos ton chronon*; 1 Peter 1:20), and “the last hour” (*eschate hora*; 1 John 2:18).

The very concept of the Doctrine of Eschatology focuses our attention on the reality that humanity is rapidly moving toward a terminus. We are not part of an eternal “Circle of Life”; there is an end.

The Biblical picture is that the end will come as a mighty cataclysm.

And while the focus of our study is primarily on the end of all things, there is an individualistic sense which must be considered. For death comes to all men. A generation comes and a generation goes. How do those who have died figure into the grand scheme of God’s planned ending of this Age?

The Relation of Eschatology to the other Doctrines

One Catholic author says, “Eschatology is the crown and capstone of dogmatic theology.” (Eschatology, or the Catholic Doctrine of the Last Things, Pohle, p.1)

“It is the one locus of theology, in which all the other loci must come to a head, to a final conclusion.” (Berkhof, p.665)

Every other theological focus leaves some question unanswered, to which the Doctrine of the Future should give the answer. In the Doctrine of God (Theology), the question is, how will God be perfectly glorified in His work and how will His eternal purposes be achieved.

In the Doctrine of Man (Anthropology), the question answered is how the “corrupting” effect of sin will be completely overcome. In the Doctrine of Redemption (Soteriology), the question is how will the Holy Spirit finally achieve the complete redemption and glorification of God’s people.

In the Doctrine of Christ (Christology), the question is how His High Priesthood, Kingship and Prophetic offices will be manifested in the fulfillment of His Kingdom. In the Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology), the question is how the final transformation will work itself out and what it will look like.

The Doctrine of the Future Things (Eschatology) is the final tying together of all Doctrine. Given the time constraints of this class, further pursuit of this line of thought is not here possible.

8.2. The Return of Christ: When and How?

8.2.1. What Evangelicals Generally All Agree On

8.2.1.1. The Sudden, Personal, Visible, Bodily Return of Christ

“This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11)

“The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God” (1 Thess 4:16)

The author of Hebrews wrote that Christ *“will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”* (Heb 9:28)

The appearing of Christ will not be a mere spiritual coming, but will be a **personal and bodily return that is sudden.**

Believers Are Exhorted To Eagerly Long For Christ’s Return

“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20)

Biblical Christianity trains us *“to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2:12-13)

Ponder the contrast between the Church in China and the Church in the West... Who longs for His return? Who is in love with the things of the world?

8.2.1.2. The Church Does Not Know When Christ Will Return

“The Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt 24:44)

“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour” (Matt 25:130)

“But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch; for you do not know when the time will come” (Mark 13:32-33)

The point of these passages is that we cannot know when Christ will come back. *“Anyone who claims to know the date on which Christ will return – from whatever source – should be rejected as incorrect”* at best. (Systematic Theology, Grudem, p.1094)

8.2.1.3. All Evangelicals Agree On The Final Results Of Christ's Return

Judgment of unbelievers...
Final reward of believers...
Life forever in a new heaven and a new earth...
His Kingdom will never end for all eternity...
All effects of the Fall will be done away with...

8.2.2. Evangelicals Disagree Over The Details...

The nature of the millennium...
The relationship of Christ's return to the millennium...
The sequence of Christ's return...
The Great Tribulation Period...
The question of the salvation of the Jewish people and the relationship between the Jewish Saved and the Church...

8.2.3. Important Observation

Evangelicals who hold to various positions all agree that Scripture is God's *God-breathed* & inerrant word and have a commitment to believe whatever is taught by Scripture. The differences concern the interpretation of various passages relating to these events, but the differences should be seen as matters of secondary importance, not differences over primary Doctrinal matters.

In other words, debates between Evangelicals over these issues should be, as far as possible, regarded as "In-House" debates because they all fall within the "pale of Orthodoxy".

8.2.4. Passages Which Predict A Sudden & Unexpected Return

Therefore you also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (Matt 24:39)

The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know. (Matt 24:50)

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. (Matt 25:13)

The end of all things is at hand. (1 Peter 4:7)

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and all the works that are upon it will be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10)

Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay everyone for what he has done. (Rev. 22:20)

“If there were no passages in the New Testament about signs that would precede Christ’s return, we would probably conclude from the passages just quoted that Jesus could come at any moment. In this sense, we can say that Christ’s return is imminent.” (Grudem, p.1096)

And what of this aspect of the Scriptural expectation that His return would be imminent? For it’s been over 2000 years.

Remember that Biblical prophecy often speaks in terms of a “prophetic foreshortening,” which foresees future events but does not explicitly take into account the intervening time before those events take place.

Furthermore, remember that the Lord has a different perspective on time than we do. (2 Peter 3:8-9)

8.2.5. Signs That Precede Christ’s Return

8.2.5.1. The Preaching Of the Gospel To All Nations

And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. (Mark 13:10; Matt 24:14)

8.2.5.2. The Great Tribulation

For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will be. And if the Lord had not shortened the days, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. (Mark 13:19-20)

8.2.5.3. False Prophets Working Signs and Wonders

False christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. (Mark 13:22; Matt 24:23-24)

8.2.5.4. Signs in the Heavens

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.” (Mark 13:24-26)

8.2.5.5. The Coming of the Man of Lawlessness and the Rebellion

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or

*a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, **and the man of lawlessness is revealed**, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And **then the lawless one will be revealed**, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. **The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan** with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (2 Thess 2:1-10)*

This man of Lawlessness is sometimes identified with the beast in Revelation 13, and sometimes called the antichrist, the final and worst of the “antichrists” mentioned in 1 John 2:18.

8.2.5.6. The Salvation of the *pleroma* [fullness] of Israel

Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean... Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob. (Romans 11:12, 25-26)

8.2.5.7. Is it not true that these events have not occurred? And what does that do to the imminent nature of Christ’s return?

One solution is to say that Christ could not come at any time. Yet does this not nullify the warnings of Christ that we should watch and be ready every moment?

A second solution is to reconcile the two sets of passages in various ways:

(1st) One method of reconciling the passages is to conclude the New Testament is speaking of **two distinct returns of Christ**; a secret coming when He takes Christians out of the world, and then, after seven years of tribulation a visible, public triumphant coming to reign as King upon the earth.

It should be noted that this solution is very young historically. It was unknown in the history of the church until it was set forth by John Nelson Darby (1800–1882). Clearly, then, the Church has through the centuries thought there were other understandings by which to reconcile the tension between the passages.

(2nd) A second solution concludes that **all the signs have been fulfilled**, and therefore Christ’s Return is imminent.

(3rd) A third solution is to say that **it is unlikely but possible that the signs have already been fulfilled**. This would leave us with uncertainty as to whether the signs have been fulfilled or not.

“This position is an attractive one because it takes seriously the primary purpose for the signs, the primary purpose for the warnings, and the fact that we are not to know when Christ will return.” (Grudem, p.1101)

“It is spiritually unhealthy for us to say that we know that these signs have not occurred, and it seems to stretch the bounds of credible interpretation to say that we know that these signs have occurred. But it seems to fit exactly in the middle of the New Testament approach toward Christ’s return to say that we do not know with certainty if these events have occurred. Responsible exegesis, an expectation of Christ’s sudden return, and a measure of humility in our understanding, are all three preserved in this position.” (Grudem, p.1105)

8.2.3. The Millennium

8.2.3.1. Explanation & Scriptural Basis

The word millennium means “one thousand years”. The term comes from Rev 20:1-6. Historically there have been three major views.

*Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. 2 And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. 4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. **They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and **they will reign with him for a thousand years.**”*

8.2.3.2. Amillennialism

As the name reveals, this view holds that there is no millennium as is generally understood. The understanding is that the millennium is the church age which will continue until Christ’s return when there will be the resurrection of both believers and unbelievers. For this reason some prefer the name **Realized Millennialism**.

Believers will be re-embodied with glorified bodies and enter into heaven forever following the Great White Throne Judgment and Wedding Feast of the Lamb. The Lost will be re-

embodied with immortal bodies and be cast into hellfire for all eternity. This view holds that all end time events happen at once, immediately after Christ's return which is imminent.

8.2.3.3. Postmillennialism

This view holds that Christ will return after the millennium. As a result of the progress of the gospel and growth of the church a larger and larger proportion of mankind will become Christian. Hence, societies worldwide will function more and more according to God's standards gradually bringing in a "millennial age" of peace and righteousness. This "millennium" will last a long time though not necessarily a literal one-thousand years. At the end of this period, Christ will return to earth, all will be raised, the final judgment will occur followed by the new heaven and new earth and entrance into the eternal states.

Postmillennialism was very optimistic about the spread of the gospel and its growth proportionally with mankind at large. This view thrives best when there is an absence of war and apparent progress is being made by mankind at large.

8.2.3.4. Classic or Historic Pre-millennialism

This view dates from the earliest centuries onward. It holds that Christ will come back before the millennium. This view holds that the present church age will continue until a time of great tribulation, at the end of which Christ will return to earth to establish a millennial kingdom.

Believers who have died will be bodily raised, and will reign with Christ on earth 1000 years; some hold this to be a literal 1000 years and others a figurative. During this time Christ will be physically present and will reign as King over all the earth.

Believers who have been raised and those alive when He returns will be given resurrection bodies never to die again. Unbelievers who remain on the earth will be converted in large numbers.

At the beginning of this millennial reign, Satan will be bound, cast into the bottomless pit no longer to influence the nations. After the thousand years, Satan will be loosed and will join forces with the unbelievers who remain. Satan's forces will gather for battle, but will be defeated decisively after which Christ will raise from the dead all unbelievers who have died throughout history for the Final Judgment. The Eternal States follow.

8.2.3.5. Pre-tribulational (or Dispensational) Pre-millennialism

This view holds that Christ will return not only before the millennium, but also before the Great Tribulation. Hence, another return of Christ is added before His return to reign on earth in the millennium.

The church age will continue until, unexpectedly and secretly, Christ will rapture believers from the earth after which the Great Tribulation takes place for 7 years.

During this seven-year period a great ingathering of the fullness of the Jewish people will occur. At the end of the tribulation, Christ will come back with his saints to reign for 1000 years. After this millennial reign will be a period of rebellion, resulting in Satan's final defeat, the resurrection of unbelievers, the final judgment and the eternal states.

8.3. The Resurrection of the body

The resurrection of the body is a foundational doctrine in the Gospel. For without it the entire edifice of Christianity collapses. Indeed, one writer summarizes tightly saying, "Biblical religion calls for obedience to God and promises rewards for obedience and curses for disobedience. The doctrine of the resurrection is basic to the Biblical order of rewards, but it is also central to the doctrine of creation and redemption." (*The Foundations of Social Order: Studies in the Creeds and Councils of the early Church*, Rousas John Rushdoony, p. 205)

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:12-23)

8.3.1. There is no true Christianity without the doctrine of the resurrection of the body

8.3.2. The doctrine of the resurrection is the logical conclusion to the doctrine of creation

Paganism has essentially viewed life as an eternal recurrence of misery, change and decay in an endless cycle. Early Greek thought embraced the idea of the transmigration of souls

"The world of antiquity, committed to humanism, tolerated any absurdity concerning the future life but rejected, without a hearing often, or with demands that the preacher be killed, the doctrine of the resurrection. The answer is obvious. Every one of these other beliefs, i.e., the immortality of the soul, reincarnation or transmigration, etc., all affirmed the basic divinity of man and his self-salvation. The Biblical doctrine made man a creature and God sovereign. It placed man's total life under a total God, and this was and is the offence of the doctrine of the resurrection. The immortality of the soul, in its every form, is a doctrine which makes man

his own god and savior; it gives man an 'open' universe, i.e., free from God, which is man's to explore in time and eternity. God having created all things for His glory, does not allow sin and the fall to frustrate His purpose; therefore, Tertullian said, 'all creation is instinct with renewal.' God's purpose is the restoration and fulfillment of all things. 'The whole, therefore, of this revolving order of things bear witness to the resurrection of the dead.'" (Rushdoony, p.206)

Man is the sinner, not the body

In the beginning the Creator formed man from the dust of the earth pronouncing the 6th day's work "very good".

The body, in its first creation was destined to be inhabited by God Himself; both in the Incarnation and in the living Temple of the Holy God.

Historic paganism has always moved between two extremes as regards the body. Asceticism, on the one hand, is the attempt to transcend the body by denying it. Flagrant hedonism & license, on the other hand, is the other extreme.

Unlike paganism, though, orthodox Christianity embraces a respect for creation & thus the restoration of all things.

8.3.3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is inseparably linked to the resurrection of all believers

He is indeed the first born, the first fruits, the beginning point of God's newly recreated humanity!

8.3.4. Without the resurrection our faith is vain (1 Cor 15)

8.3.5. Jesus Christ, as very man of very man, has opened up for His church, this glorious destiny!

"It is therefore basic to creedalism to affirm: *'I believe in...the Resurrection of the body, and the Life everlasting,'* or, as the Nicene Creed even more triumphantly declares, *'And I look for the Resurrection of the dead: And the Life of the world to come. Amen.'*" (Rushdoony, p.210)

8.3.6. Immortality

While paganism, both cultured & primitive, has historically believed in a supernatural & immortal soul in man, this view is not taught in Scripture.

In fact, "Immortality" is ascribed in the Bible to God alone.

To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17)

He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. (! Timothy 6:15-16)

When the term is applied to man, it is a redemptive gift from God.

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written...(1 Corinthians 15:53-54)

Indeed, it is *our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, (2 Timothy 1:10)*

“For the Bible, body and soul are alike created by God, alike fallen, depraved, and reprobate in Adam, alike redeemed in Christ and to be regarded as God’s gifts and destiny for man. Both body and soul are alike to put on immortality and enjoy the glories of the resurrection. Both body and soul are therefore to be treated with respect as God’s creation and blessing, wonderful now, and glorious in the world to come. The assured faith of the Nicene Creed affirms: ‘And I look for the Resurrection of the dead: and the Life of the world to come!’” (Rushdoony, p.211)

8.4. The Final Judgment

8.4.1. Scriptural Evidence of the Final Judgment

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revel 20:11-15)

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.(Acts 17:30-31)

But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.” (Romans 2:5)

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day. (Jude 6)

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment. (2 Pet 2:4-9)

8.4.2. Jesus Christ will be the Judge

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom. (2 Tim 4:1)

And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. (Acts 10:42)

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. (Jn 5:26-27)

8.4.3. The Lost will undergo a judgment involving degrees of punishment

But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you. (Matt 11:22-24)

Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation. (Luke 20:47)

This judgment will take into account every wrong deed and every careless word:

I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak. (Matt 12:36)

For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (Eccl. 12:14)

8.4.4. The Saved will undergo a judgment of rewards

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Romans 14:10-12)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Cor 5:10)

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor 3:12-15)

And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' (Luke 19:17)

8.4.5. Angels will be judged

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day. (Jude 6)

Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! (1 Cor 6:3)

8.4.6. Believers, at least some, will help in the work of Judgment

Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! (1 Cor 6:2-3)

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed." (Revel 20:4)

Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matt 19:28)

8.4.7. The Necessity of the Final Judgment

"It will serve the purpose rather of displaying before all rational creatures the declarative glory of God in a formal, forensic act, which magnifies on the one hand His holiness and

righteousness, and on the other hand, His grace and mercy. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the judgment at the last day will differ from that of the death of each individual in more than one respect. It will not be secret, but public; it will not pertain to the soul only, but also to the body; it will not have reference to a single individual, but to all men.” (Berkhof, p.731)

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. (Rom 3:19)

Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. (Rev 19:1-2)

The Doctrine of the Final Judgment should satisfy our inner sense of the need for justice in the world; yet because of what we hope for challenge us to forgive our neighbor. Furthermore it should provide a powerful motive for righteous living and evangelism.

O Quickly Come, Dread Judge of All

O quickly come, dread judge of all; for, awful though thine advent be,
All shadows from the truth will fall, and falsehood die, in sight of thee:
O quickly come, for doubt and fear like clouds dissolve when thou art near.

O quickly come, great king of all; reign all around us, and within;
Let sin no more our souls enthrall, let pain and sorrow die with sin:
O quickly come; for thou alone canst make thy scattered people one.

O quickly come, true life of all; for death is mighty all around;
On ev'ry home his shadows fall, on ev'ry heart his mark is found:
O quickly come; for grief and pain can never cloud thy glorious reign.

O quickly come, sure light of all; for gloomy night broods o'er our way;
And weakly souls begin to fall with weary watching for the day:
O quickly come; for round thy throne no eye is blind, no night is known.

Author: Lawrence Tuttiett, 1854)

Everlasting Hell

The wicked are consigned to a real place

“And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt 25:30)

“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”
(Matt 25:46)

“The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ ... between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.” (Luke 16)

The Biblical descriptions are not nebulous and ethereal. They are intensely localized. It is a real place.

The Tormented State of Punishment in which the Wicked continue their existence

Hell will be a place of a total absence of the beneficent providential favor of God. It will represent an endless disturbance of existence as a result of the complete domination of sin with corresponding positive pains and sufferings of both body and soul including subjective suffering of conscience, anguish, despair, weeping and gnashing of teeth. The punishment received will be commensurate with their sin against what light they had.

“And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.” (Luke 12:47-48)

““Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”
(Matt 11:21-24)

“And throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt 13:50)

“It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’
(Mark 9:47, 48)

“And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his

anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.” (Revel 14:9-10)

“But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” (Revel 21:8)

If all is literal, what horror! And if all is figurative, how much worse must the reality be?

“These verses should make us realize the immensity of the evil that is found in sin and rebellion against God, and the magnitude of the holiness and the justice of God that calls forth this kind of punishment.” (Grudem, p.1149)

The Eternality of Hell

“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matt 25:46)

Jesus spoke of “unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43), where “their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48). Furthermore, the chasm between the dead saved and the dead damned is impassable and fixed (Luke 16:26).

Whatever the duration, time wise of heaven, the same is true of hell.

The New Heavens and New Earth

The Scriptural Promise

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.” (Isa 65:17)

“But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” (2 Peter 3:13)

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.” (Revel 21:1)

Heaven is a Real Place

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11)

“But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and

Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:55-56)

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2)

Heaven will be a renewal of the physical creation

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." (Romans 8:19-21)

"And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." (Revel 21:5)

Complete destruction and replacement, or change and renewal? Lutheran scholars emphasize an entirely new creation, while Reformed scholars emphasize a renewal of the present creation. The Reformed rationale? Such action by God justifies His original pronouncement *"It is good."* While an entirely new creation would seem to imply that Satan caused an entire scrapping of the original created realm.

Our Resurrection Bodies will exist in heaven

The Genesis 1 Creation Account clearly teaches that in the beginning, the physical realm was considered by God as *"good"*. It was not inherently evil. Physicality is not bad. Hence, God intends now, as He did in the beginning, for us to exist forever as both physical body and spirit/soul.

Consider the implications for a physical resurrected body from the following passages:

"Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Revel 19:9)

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Revel 22:1-2)

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not

only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”
(Romans 8:19-23)

The New Creation will include an unending succession of moments

This is to say that as finite creatures, we will never exist in a state of “timelessness”. Though there will be no night (Rev 21:25), yet there will be a very real existence with an unending and glorious succession of moments of worship, prayer, fellowship, learning, exploring, etc....

Heaven provides great motivation to lay up treasure in heaven rather than on earth

“Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” (2 Peter 3:11-13)

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt 6:19-21)

Heaven will be a place of Great Beauty, Abundance and Joy in God’s Presence

“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.” (Revel 21:10-11)

“The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.” (Revel 21:18-21)

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:11)

“One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.” (Psalm 27:4)

“The Sands of Time are Sinking”

The sands of time are sinking, the dawn of heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for, the fair sweet morn awakes;
Dark, dark hath been the midnight, but dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land.

The King there in His beauty without a veil is seen;
It were a well-spent journey though sev'n deaths lay between:
The Lamb with His fair army doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land.

O Christ, He is the fountain, the deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted, more deep I'll drink above:
There to an ocean fullness His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land.

The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of grace;
Not at the crown He giveth, but on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel's land.

Author: Anne R. Cousin, 1857

9. DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

9.1. The nature of the Angels

9.1.1. They are created beings; not “Uncreated Being”

Understand the either/or nature of this. Everything is either created or Uncreated. Everything is either contingent or not contingent. Everything is either finite or Infinite. Angels are not God. Angels are created beings made by *“The Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen.”*

As created beings, they are immortal, but not eternal. In this sense, they are like mankind, immortal by decree and the power of God, hence, living forever, but with a definitive point of origin.

Nehemiah 9:6 - *“You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.”* (ESV)

Observe, that the hosts of heaven, in other words, the angelic beings, were part of what was made or created by the LORD.

Colossians 1:16 – *“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”*

Note again, that the realm of the invisible, was created by Him. Clearly, this refers to the angelic realm.

As far as the Biblical data indicates, no creative work preceded the creation of heaven and earth. Hence, the angels were created by God before the 7th day.

Job 38:4-7 records, *“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”*

This may indicate that the angels were present at the founding of the world, but not that they preceded the primary creation itself.

9.1.2. They are spiritual beings without physical bodies

Luke 24:39 says, *““See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”*(Luke 24:39; ESV)

Many may be present in a small physical space; see Luke 8:30.

Colossians 1:16, again, clearly teaches that they are spiritual beings.

While angels from time to time were allowed a bodily form for a specific appearance, they do not ordinarily have physical bodies.

Being created beings, they are incapable of being in two or more places simultaneously. They have spatial limitations, though not exactly like our spatial limitations. They, like us, are finite and therefore limited.

9.1.3. They are rational and moral beings

They are personal beings endowed by God with both intelligence and will. Scripture explicitly teaches that angels are intelligent beings

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.” (Matthew 24:36)

The clear implication is that while not omniscient, they are superior to mankind in knowledge.

They are volitionally free beings, with moral obligation.

“And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day”(Jude 6)

They are partly good and partly evil. Upon completing the creation, God judged that everything was good. This assessment coupled with the words of Jude 6, and others, lead to the conclusion that at the beginning of creation, the angelic realm, all angels were good; without sin.

9.2. The Number and Organization of the Angels

While no definite number is given, Scripture clearly reveals they constitute a mighty army. They are repeatedly called the host of heaven or of God.

““The LORD came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran; he came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand.” (Deut 33:2)

“Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.” (Rev 5:11)

Many names are used to describe them: “Sons of God” (Job 1:6); “Holy ones” (Psalm 89:5, 7); “Spirits” (Heb 1:14); “Watchers” (Daniel 4:13); “Thrones,” “dominions,” “principalities,” “authorities” (Col. 1:16); “Powers” (Eph 1:21).

There are several specific names, which point to different classes of angels:

Cherubim

Seraphim

The Living Creatures – Ezekiel and Revelation speak of these (Ezek 1:5-14; Rev. 4:6-8). Given their appearance, they seem to be mighty representatives of various parts of God’s entire creation. They worship God continually: *“Day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”*

Gabriel and Michael – These two alone are named in Scripture.

Gabriel appears in Dan 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26. It seems to have been his special task to mediate and interpret divine revelations.

Michael appears in Dan 10:13, 21; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7. From the fact he is called “the archangel” in Jude 9, and the expression used in Rev 12, it seems he occupies a primary place among the angels.

9.3. The Service of the Angels

Ordinary Service: Praising God day and night (Job 38:7; Isa 6; Rev 5); minister to the heirs of salvation (Heb 1:14); rejoice at conversions of sinners (Luke 15:10); watch over believers (Psa 34:7); protect little ones (Matt 18:10); are present in the Church (1 Cor 11:10); learn from the Church of the manifold riches of the grace of God (Eph 3:10); convey/transport believers to the place of paradise (Luke 16:22).

Extraordinary Service: Mediate special revelation of God, communicate blessings and execute judgments. Their activities seem to be most prominent in the great turning points of the Redemptive plan, such as the days of the patriarchs, the giving of the Law, the period of exile and restoration, the birth, resurrection and ascension of the Lord.

9.4. Cherubim & Seraphim

Cherubim

Mentioned repeatedly in Scripture; guarding the entrance to the Garden (Gen 3:24); gazing upon the mercy-seat (Ex 25:18); constitute the chariot on which God descends to the earth (Psa 18:10).

“These symbolical representations simply serve to bring out their extraordinary power and majesty. More than other creatures they were destined to reveal the power, the majesty, and the glory of God, and to guard His holiness in the garden of Eden, in tabernacle and temple, and in the descent of God to the earth.” (Berkhof, p.146)

Seraphim

Mentioned only in Isaiah 6:2-7, where they continually worship the LORD calling to one another, “*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!*”

“In distinction from the Cherubim, they stand as servants round about the throne of the heavenly King, sing His praises, and are ever ready to do His bidding. While the Cherubim are the mighty ones, they [the Seraphim] might be called the nobles among the angels. While the former guard the holiness of God, they serve the purpose of reconciliation, and thus prepare men for the proper approach to God.” (Berkhof, p.146)

9.5. Demons

9.5.1. Their origin

Though created good (Gen 1:31), there are two passages in Scripture which teach that some of the angels fell from the original state in which they were placed.

2 Peter 2:4 – “*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment*”

Jude 6 - “*And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—*”

While the specifics of their sin are not revealed, the historical understanding is that they exalted themselves against God seeking to usurp His position. The books of Ezekiel & Isaiah may give insight into the sin of their leader – Satan “the anointed cherub”

9.6. Satan

9.6.1. Scripture passages

Ezekiel 28: 12-17 “*Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD: “You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. 14. You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God in the*

midst of the stones of fire you walked. 15. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. 16. In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17. Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground..."

Isaiah 14:12-15 *"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! 13. You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; 14. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' 15. But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit."*

John 8:44 *"You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."*

1 John 3:8 *"Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning."*

9.6.2. Satan is a creature created by God

Originally endowed with sinlessness, beauty described as splendor & wisdom (Ezekiel 28: 12, 15, 17)

9.6.3. Satan is a cherub (Ezekiel 28:14)

As a cherub, he had the special position of "covering" (Ezekiel 28:17)

Satan radiated "brightness" or "splendor"; a word used 22x exclusively with the glory radiating from a supreme potentate. (Eze 28:17)

Satan was originally covered with precious stones (as was the High Priest; Eze 28:13)

Satan had musical instrumentation beyond a voice (Eze 28:13)

"The workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created." (KJV)

"The workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you, on the day that you were created." (NASV)

The NASV has a footnote *"Or tambourines and flutes"*

Satan was “anointed,” a term often denoting a sacred trust (Eze 28:14)

9.6.4. Satan is the author and originator of sin; specifically rebellion & insurrection, lying and murder (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8)

He is the head of the fallen angels who joined him in rebellion. He is called “*the prince of this world*” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and even “*the god of this world*” (2 Cor 4:4).

The name “*Satan*” means “adversary”. He attacks the crown of God’s creation, mankind, works destruction and is therefore called *Apollyon* or “destroyer”. He further is called *Diabolos* or “accuser”, who accuses the people of God (Rev 12:10).

The original sin of Satan involved “trade” or “merchandizing” (Eze 28:16)

Satan’s original assigned location before he was cast down was on the earth. For he reasoned he would “ascend into heaven... above the heights of the clouds...” but God said he would be “cut down to the ground” (Isa 14:12-16)

Furthermore he was in “Eden” before he sinned. Here God would make the garden he placed Adam & Eve in.

Satan, with all the angelic realm, were likely created before the six days of creation recorded in Genesis 1 (Job 28:4-7)

Satan was called a “son of God” (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7)

9.6.5. As a cherub, Satan has the face of an ox.

“As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness around it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming metal. And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had a human likeness, but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf’s foot. And they sparkled like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: their wings touched one another. Each one of them went straight forward, without turning as they went. As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces.” (Ezek 1:4-11)

“And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was a human face, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. And the cherubim mounted up. These were the living creatures that I saw by the Chebar canal.” (Ezek 10:14, 15)

Observe that here God reveals the face of a cherub to be that of an ox. Or rather, the ox in the physical realm reveals to us, in a no doubt shadowy manner, the strength and power of a cherub's face.

Consider further that the ox was frequently used in ancient times for idol worship. Baal worship was often in the form of an ox. The Israelites at the foot of Mt. Sinai built a golden calf. The word cherub, in Syriac and Chaldee, signifies to till or plough, the proper work of an ox. Eastern religions hold the cow (ox) to be sacred. What could this be but Satan's craftily devised seduction of humanity? Thus mankind worships the creature; a cherub.

Consider that if pride was Satan's particular sin, then some understanding may be gained as to the direction of temptation he laid before Adam & Eve, appealing to the same ambition in them.

9.6.6. Observe the NT admonition & warning to give this fallen creature due respect

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

*Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. **But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."** But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.*

(Jude 1:3-10 ESV)

It is the nature of human nature (depraved) to walk in the sin of presumption...

10. The GOSPEL CALL

10.1. The Problem of Depravity

Classical Arminianism affirms the total depravity of mankind since Adam & Eve. We are born having been imputed the iniquity of our fathers. We prefer willful rebellion to obedience, evil to good and are utterly unable to change on our own.

Dr. Picirilli says, “The nature of human depravity creates a serious problem for Soteriology. As naturally-born, depraved human beings, no one is able, no one can or will respond to the gospel offer in faith. Left alone, no person would ever accept Christ. We must start with this when we speak about applying salvation to an individual. Remember that David said, ‘I was born in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.’ Passages like Ps. 53:2, in the Old Testament, are confirmed by New Testament passages like Rom.3. The fact that Jesus died on the cross and that God offers salvation to all who will accept Christ’s provision is not enough by itself. Depraved human beings, left alone, want nothing to do with God.” (*“Calvinism, Arminianism and the Theology of Salvation – Lecture Three: Salvation by Faith Applied”*; Dr. Robert Picirilli; *Leroy Forlines Lectures* at Free Will Baptist Bible College; November 19-22, 2002)

Constitutionally, every human being is endowed, granted by the Sovereign God with the ability for free choice. Yet we have had imputed the iniquity of our fathers making us totally depraved. Hence, no person will, no person can choose God on his/her own. How did God solve this problem of depravity?

Calvinism asserts that God’s solution is to first regenerate an individual before he can respond positively to the gospel offer and exercise saving faith.

But, accepting this soteriological option means embracing Calvinism as a whole. Hence, salvation is not truly by faith. It is by Election. God saves some despite their depraved wills and condemns all the rest to eternal hell by virtue of His not electing them.

Finally consider the options. What do we do with the Biblical teaching on the effects of Adam’s sin on all mankind? If we accept the Reformed understanding of Total Depravity we have only two choices. Either God is sovereignly choosing the sinner or God is sovereignly enabling the sinner to be able to make a contingent and freewill choice. The remaining options for interpreting the Biblical data are either full blown Pelagianism or some understanding of Semi-Pelagianism. Either there are no effects from Adam’s sin on mankind (Pelagianism), or there are limited effects (Semi-Pelagianism).

Calvinism sees God alone doing the electing. Classical Arminianism and Semi-Pelagianism see man as able to make the contingent and freewill choice. Classical Arminianism believes it to be because God has Sovereignly and preveniently graced the sinner. Semi-Pelagianism believes it to be because the effects of Adam’s sin were not total, leaving the will, the volition free to make a contingent choice. Pure Pelagianism believes there is no impact, no consequence for mankind from Adam’s sin.

10.2. Pre-regenerating Grace

“Arminians face the problem of depravity by acknowledging the need for a work of grace within the sinner to enable that sinner to exercise faith and be saved. Rather than regeneration, however, this is a work that Arminius called ‘prevenient’ or ‘preventing’ grace. This means grace that precedes, that goes before; an ‘enabling grace,’ or even better ‘pre-regenerating grace.’” (“*Calvinism, Arminianism and the Theology of Salvation – Lecture Three: Salvation by Faith Applied*”; Dr. Robert Picirilli; *Leroy Forlines Lectures* at Free Will Baptist Bible College; November 19-22, 2002)

Cottrell’s understanding of “original grace” closely parallels this. The concept is that when the gospel is heard by an individual, God the Holy Spirit works within that person’s heart or mind enabling him, in spite of the inclination and effect of depravity, to put his freewill choice of faith in Christ accepting the dictates of offered grace.

“This is often called ‘conviction,’ another way of saying ‘convincement’ – one way of referring to this pre-regenerating work of the Spirit that accompanies the gospel and makes it possible for the depraved sinner to hear well enough to grasp and respond. The sinner must not just hear the gospel but must be convinced, convicted, of its truths.

This is sometimes called ‘drawing’: *‘No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him’* & *‘no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father’* (John 6:44 & 65). When the gospel is preached under the convicting power of the Spirit of God, there is a tug at the heart that makes the gospel appealing.

This can also be expressed as ‘opening the heart’: of Lydia we read that ‘The Lord opened her heart.’ The sinner’s heart is by nature closed too tightly to ‘hear’ the truth. If faith comes by hearing, the Lord must open deaf ears to enable the sinner to hear with understanding.

We might also express this as ‘persuasion,’ although that word gets pretty close to faith itself. But it isn’t quite. A person can be persuaded of the truth of something without making a personal commitment to that truth. When the gospel is preached and the Spirit does this gracious work, the sinner recognizes what he hears as true.

In summary, this pre-regenerating grace is:

- entirely gracious
- preserves God’s personal dealings with us, enabling our wills without forcing them
- makes faith possible without making it necessary
- leads on to regeneration unless the sinner resists
- requires the intelligent hearing of the gospel
- enables both those who do receive Christ and those who hear the gospel with understanding and then reject Christ.”

10.3. REPENTANCE & CONVERSION

Conversion (Strong's Concordance #1994)

Epistrophe (1995); noun meaning "conversion"; *Epistrepho* (1994); verb for "to turn oneself around", "to convert", "to turn toward".

And they turned (1994) *to the Lord* (Acts 9:35)

You should turn (1994) *from these vain things to a living God* (Acts 14:15)

To open their eyes so that they may turn (1994) *from darkness to light...from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins...* (Acts 26:18)

Repentance (3340)

Repent therefore, and **turn** again, that your sins may be blotted out (Acts 3:19)

*They should **repent** and **turn** to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.* (Acts 26:20; ESV)

Metanoeo (3340); "to know after"; "to repent with regret accompanied by a true change of heart toward God". "It signifies a change of mind consequent to the after knowledge indicating regret for the course pursued and resulting in a wiser view of the past and future. Most importantly, it is distinguished from *metamelomai* (3338), to regret because of the consequences of one's act or acts." (Zodhiates; Lexical Notes)

It is important to observe that *metanoeo* essentially is an altered mental & heart attitude toward the path chosen, with the result of *epistrophe*, an altered behavioral & attitudinal direction. The first is inward, the second is outward. The first is intangible, the second tangible. The first consists of thoughts chosen and conclusions reached, while the second consists of new behavior and attitudes acted upon.

10.4. FAITH (#4102)

"The just [righteous] shall live by faith" (Romans 1:16, 17)

Definition: *Pistis* (4102); from *peitho* (3982), to persuade. To be persuaded with knowledge that is believed and a trust that is absolute.

10.4.1. Saving Faith

Knowledge alone is not saving faith

Notia; latin for the knowledge or data itself; i.e. “notes”

Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.(Romans 1:32)

Agreement with knowledge is not saving faith

Assensus; latin for “to give assent” to a thing; to believe it to be true.

This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him. (John 3:2)

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!
(James 2:19)

Only penitent trust is what Scripture describes as saving faith

Fiducia; latin; in contemporary usage a fiduciary stands in a trustee relationship to the person or body for whom the trustee acts; Hence, this third level of faith describes a relationship of absolute trust yet coupled with a necessary element: repentance!

Faith that is penitent trust represents the two sides of the same coin. Said another way: Faith and repentance of two sides of the same coin. Faith is the heart response when the sinner looks heavenward at the Savior. Repentance is the heart response when the sinner looks at his sin and his wicked heart.

Saving faith embraces the knowledge, believing in its truth and then with penitent trust wholly places everything at the feet of Jesus looking entirely unto Him for forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation.

Example: Boat at waterfall...

10.4.2. “Easy-believism” vs. “Lordship Salvation”

“To put it simply, *the gospel call to faith presupposes that sinners must repent of their sin and yield to Christ’s authority.* This, in a nutshell, is what is commonly referred to as lordship salvation.”

Distinctives of Lordship Salvation

- First, Scripture teaches that the gospel calls sinners to a faith that is united with repentance; penitent trust
- Second, Scripture teaches that salvation is all God’s work. Those who believe are saved utterly apart from any effort on their own
- Third, Scripture teaches that the object of faith is Christ Himself, not a creed or a promise
- Fourth, Scripture teaches that real faith inevitably produces a changed life
- Fifth, Scripture teaches that Jesus is Lord of all, and the faith He demands involves unconditional surrender
- Sixth, Scripture teaches that behavior is an important test of faith. Obedience is evidence that one’s faith is real

Historical Orthodoxy

The preponderance of Bible-believing Christians over the centuries have held these to be basic tenets of orthodoxy. In fact, no major orthodox movement in the history of Christianity has ever taught that sinners can spurn the lordship of Christ yet lay claim to Him as Savior.

10.4.3. Faith alone OR faith + works

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10; ESV)

“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:20; ESV)

“That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace.” (Romans 4:16; ESV)

“Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness...” (Romans 4:4-5; ESV)

Theological History

Biblical Christianity is the religion of Divine achievement; Christ’s finished, “once for all”, work. All other religions involve human achievement to one degree or another.

Observe the blunt force of the logic in Romans chapter four. A righteousness “reckoned” on faith is in utter antithesis to a system of righteousness based on works.

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness... (Romans 4:4-5; ESV)

Stated simply, those who put penitent trust (Biblical faith) in Jesus Christ, receive the gift of Christ’s perfect righteousness imputed or reckoned to them.

Those who attempt to achieve their own righteousness with a mixture of faith and works will receive the wage due them. Thus the individual sinner as well as the Church stands or falls with the principle of sola fide.

Stunning to observe that Israel’s failure was rooted in their abandonment of justification by faith alone: “*For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.*” (Romans 10:3; ESV)

To make justification dependent on a mixture of faith and works is to make justification a process grounded in the believer's own flawed righteousness—rather than a declarative act of God grounded in Christ's perfect righteousness.

And as soon as justification is fused with sanctification, works of righteousness become an essential part of the process. Faith is thus diluted with works. Sola fide is abandoned. This was the error of the Galatian legalists (cf. Gal. 2:16; 5:4). Paul called it "a different gospel" (Gal. 1:6, 9). The same error is found in virtually every false cult. It's the main error of Roman Catholicism.

Nowhere in the book of Acts is the Gospel presented as faith plus works. Nowhere does the Apostolic message mix the response of faith with good works.

The two epistles, Romans and Galatians, unfold the doctrine of justification by faith revealing that we are justified by faith alone apart from human works of any kind.

10.4.3.1. A brief look at Justification

Observe that Justification is a Judicial Act of God

Observe that Justification is by Faith Alone

Observe that Justification is an Imputed Righteousness

10.4.3.2. Consider the practical implication of a Salvation through faith plus works

The problem with “God’s Eternal Scales of Justice”: How can I ever be sure? What if I die on a “downside”? What if I die with sin I have not repented of; have not confessed?

If I am saved by how good I am being, how do I find assurance or hope based on an honest assessment of my walk with the Lord?

10.4.4. The Joy of Salvation by His Grace through Faith alone

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness...

Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me...

10.5.GRACE

Grace is an attribute of God

Charis (5485); “A favor done without expectation of return; absolute freeness of the lovingkindness of God to men finding its only motive in the bounty and freeheartedness of the Giver; unearned and unmerited favor. *Charis* stands in direct antithesis to *erga*, works, the two being mutually exclusive. God’s grace affects man’s sinfulness and not only forgives the repentant sinner, but brings joy and thankfulness to him. In contrast to *charis* stands *eleos* (1656), mercy, which is concerned not with sin itself, as does *charis*, but with the misery brought upon the sinner as a consequence of that sin.” (Zodhiates, “Lexical Notes to the New Testament”).

10.5.1. Grace is the only way of salvation for sinners

A problem only God could solve

Because of the two communicable attributes of God, His Justness & His Love, there was a problem, a clash with only two options.

God could either be true to His nature of Holiness and Justice and punish the sinner, or He could be true to His nature of Love and grant the sinner the legal pronouncement of “righteous”. Yet, either choice involves a nullifying of the other.

10.5.2. The demand of God's Justness; of Law

The system of Law operates according to the following ground-rules...

Keep the commandments; Escape the penalt

Break the commandments; Suffer the penalty

Everyone is under the system of Law from the moment of conception. This is the natural framework of the creation. We are born under Law, and must respond to it. There are only two responses: Keeping it or breaking it.

It is theoretically possible to be saved under Law. The ground rules are simple and exacting: "Keep the commandments; escape the penalty." These are the rules, the code of morality that existed in the Garden of Eden before the Fall.

Thus under Law one can be saved if one keeps the commandments. But he must keep all of them and keep them perfectly. Only perfect obedience will escape the penalty. One sin and all is lost. (James 2:10; Gal 3:10)

That which has ruined and forever destroyed any potential of "being good enough to be worthy" is that "*all have sinned*" (Romans 3:23). Thus no one can be saved by Law keeping.

We cannot be good enough. For there is already a debt. A debt that can only be paid by infinity; that which is eternal. So long as we seek to relate to God in terms of Law we can expect only to be treated as we deserve.

But, the love of God has provided a means whereby we may escape the penalty of Law breaking. It comes because of His Grace. It comes because of His legal and true to His nature willingness to accept a substitute in place of the one deserving death.

10.5.3. Mercy triumphs over judgment

Consider how God turned the tables of justice upside down through the substitutionary propitiatory sacrifice of Christ...

Keep the commandments; Suffer the penalt

Break the commandments; Escape the penalty

But who has kept the commandments perfectly? Christ alone. And then He suffers the penalty (potentially) for all mankind. Thus God's Justness was satisfied ("It is finished")

and His Love, His desire to give Mercy, enabled to freely give; by His Grace!

Thus under Grace, because of Christ Jesus, we can escape the penalty of the Law. We are not treated as we deserve because God the Father treated Christ not as He deserved. And it is not that we get something we don't deserve. The true nature of the gift is that we are getting the very opposite of what we deserve.

10.5.4. Grace is at the heart of God's self-descriptive name

"The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." (Exodus 34:5-7)

10.6. BAPTISM

10.6.1. The problem of the "un-baptized church"

10.6.2. What is baptism?

10.6.3. Judaism's proselyte baptism

10.6.4. John the Baptist preaching repentance and baptizing.

10.6.5. Infant Baptism

Infant baptism is not in Scripture

What about household baptisms?

Infant baptism is not Christian baptism

Infant baptism is not a replacement sign for the Abrahamic sign of circumcision

Infant baptism is not consistent with the nature of the church.

Infant baptism is not consistent with the Doctrine of justification through faith alone

10.6.6. The Meaning of Christian Baptism

At Cincinnati Christian Seminary, Dr. Jack Cottrell had assigned the following book in the class titled “Doctrine of Baptism”...

The author, a Baptist scholar himself asserts, “the idea that baptism is a purely symbolic rite must be pronounced not alone unsatisfactory but out of harmony with the New Testament itself. Admittedly, such a judgment runs counter to the popular tradition of the Denomination to which the writer belongs, as it does to some of the significant contributions to the study of baptism that have appeared from theologians of other Churches in recent years. But the New Testament belongs to us all and we all stand judged by it. Few, if any, are concerned to oppose the contention that baptism is ‘a beautiful symbol’. The Apostolic writers make free use of the symbolism of the baptismal action; but they go further and view the act as a symbol with power, that is, a sacrament... The extent and nature of the grace which the New Testament writers declare to be present in baptism is astonishing for any who come to the study freshly with an open mind.” (*Baptism in the New Testament*; G.R. Beasley-Murray, p.263)

10.6.6.1. Baptism and Grace

Within Holy Scripture, what gifts are connected contextually with baptism?

“How are we to explain this attribution of the fullness of grace to the performance of an outward act like baptism?” (ibid. p.264)

Is this not “sacramentalism”; i.e. water regeneration?

If the notion were that of some element of magic in the water, certainly this would apply.

Yet, nowhere in the New Testament is any great significance placed upon the water in terms of some magical sacramental power. Instead, the unambiguous stress is that it is the Name of Christ, the Name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit, the death, burial & resurrection of Christ that brings the new creation into being.

“It is no new thought, but it cannot be too often before our eyes, that the grace offered in baptism, as in the eucharist, is no impersonal influence, injected through material substances, but *the gracious action of God Himself.*” (ibid., p.265)

“To speak thus is not to claim to understand all. We can no more give a complete account of our participation in the resurrection of Christ through baptism than we can give a complete account of our anticipated participation in the resurrection of Christ in the Last Day. The perplexity is occasioned not simply by the nature of baptism, as though our embarrassment made a mystery of an unreasonable inconcinnity [sp?]; the position would not be relieved if we substituted the term ‘grace’ for ‘baptism’ in the above sentence. The difficulty – perhaps I should say profundity – in which we are involved is that of attempting to describe the deals of God with man in baptism or at any other time. Our consolation is drawn from the realization that in baptism we are concerned less with water than with the Living God. We recall in this connection the common sense comment of Bernard Manning: ‘God’s way with men in Word and Sacrament, as in other things, is sure; but it is past finding out. *Why not say as much?*’ Where the flame of God burns so brightly, yet incomprehensibly, it behoves us to draw near in worship and be grateful (Heb. 12:28).” (ibid., p.266)

But is there validity to the charge of “sacramentalism”; of “water regeneration?”

For the sake of humility, ponder the perception of sacramentalism from the participants viewpoint. Does it not typically work itself out in a perfunctory performance of ritual devoid of any heart connection. The lips move while the heart remains disengaged. The liturgical ritual, even sacrament, is engaged in, while the heart and mind are utterly disconnected from the Living God behind it. Yet, having performed or had the ritual performed on his behalf, the participant perceives himself to be “straight” with God. He has done his duty. He is in good standing with God.

Indeed, upon the basis of the performed ritual, any future contemplation of further

duty or pursuit of relationship of the God behind the ritual is conspicuously absent. “I’ve gone through the sacrament and I’m okay.”

Roman Catholics embrace this form of sacramentalism on at least a one time weekly basis. Those from the Restoration Movement frequently embrace it one time only; at their baptism. Too many view their baptism as the *summum bonum* of their religious experience with God. Little if any following pursuit after the things of God takes place.

10.6.6.2. **Baptism and Faith**

Observe the fullness of Christian faith.

Beasley-Murray says, “When considering the relation of this faith to baptism, it is impossible to avoid the cognate issue of the relation of faith to grace. Manifestly, the solution of the latter problem (for problem it is) affects the attitude taken to the former; but conversely, belief and practice arising out of the attitude assumed towards faith and baptism have determined much that has been written on faith and grace, and it is notoriously difficult to view the matter without one’s confessional spectacles (I admit it of myself, even as I see it in others). The major issue is whether the gift of grace, and therefore of the salvation of God, is in any sense dependent on faith, or whether the reverse is not rather true. There is a strong tendency for the latter position to be adopted and for it to be insisted on that faith is not to be viewed as a condition of grace and salvation. Two reasons are urged in support: (i) to lay down any condition for receiving grace and salvation is to revert to the legalism Paul contested and to deny the Gospel; (ii) faith is beyond the ability of unaided man to produce, it is the gift of God, hence it is misleading to speak of it as a condition of salvation.” (ibid., p268)

He continued, “It is apparent that we stand before the old problem of how to relate the freedom of God in his bestowal of grace with the responsibility of man to repent and yield the ‘obedience of faith’ to the Gospel. As this stage of history we ought to know better than to attempt a solution of the problem by the denial of either reality; to adopt such an expedient is rapidly to find ourselves in trouble. When Cremer, for example, permitted himself to write, ‘God justifies the heathen through the means of faith in that He through the gift of justification...works faith in the heart’, he neatly reversed Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith to become faith by justification. The result is a perversion of the Gospel! Bishop Nygren put the view much more attractively when he wrote, ‘It is not man’s faith that gives the Gospel its power; quite the contrary, it is the power of the gospel that makes it possible for one to believe’.” (ibid., p.270-271)

“It seems that we are compelled to recognize a polarity here, such as Schlatter expressed: ‘In faith two characteristics are inherent: *it is worked by God and willed by man*’. We are called on to recognize ‘the mystery of free grace and the mystery of free faith’. Beyond this we cannot penetrate.

Observe the interwoven nature of faith and baptism

The relation of faith to baptism is illuminated by the relation of faith to the Gospel and to grace. “For baptism is the embodiment of the Gospel. The objective givenness of baptism lies in its being a representation of the redemptive act of God in Christ, whereby life from the dead became possible for men, and the means of participation in that act and life through participation in the Christ. God Himself must grant this participation, even as He gave the Christ on the cross and raised Him from death.” (ibid., p271)

“In baptism the Gospel proclamation and the hearing of faith become united in one indissoluble act, at one and the same time an act of grace and faith, an act of God and man.” (ibid., p.272)

“Care must be taken not to press this beyond warrant, but it is undoubtedly true that in the New Testament it is everywhere assumed that faith proceeds to baptism and that baptism is for faith.” (ibid., p272)

“Baptism and faith are but the outside and the inside of the same thing.” (The Death of Christ, James Denney, p.185)

“God’s gracious giving to faith belongs to the context of baptism, even as God’s gracious giving in baptism is to faith. Faith has no merit to claim such gifts and baptism has no power to produce them; all is of God, who brings man to faith and to baptism, and in his sovereignty has been pleased so to order his giving. Faith therefore ought not to be represented as self-sufficient; Christ comes to it in the Gospel, in the sacraments, in the Church, and it needs them all. Nor should baptism be regarded as self-operative. It is wrong to represent the function of faith as merely that of asking for baptism in which God works irrespective of man’s attitude, or of understanding what God does in baptism, or of evidencing an intention of making the appropriate response after baptism. Baptism is rather the divinely appointed rendezvous of grace for faith. It is, as Ernst Fuchs has put it, the goal of faith, or, according to N.P. Williams, ‘the indispensable external expression and crowning moment of the act of faith’”. (ibid., p273-274)

10.6.6.3. Baptism and the Spirit

In the Acts and Epistles baptism is the supreme moment of both the giving and the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.

“Hence baptism in the name of Christ, which is a ‘putting on’ Christ and a setting of a man in Christ, cannot be other than a baptism in the Spirit. So primitive Christianity believed. ‘You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God*’ (1 Cor. 6:11). ‘In *one Spirit* we were all baptized into *one Body*...and were all saturated in his outpouring’ (1 Cor 12:13). There can be little doubt that this doctrine would never have been seriously challenged in the Church, as has been the case, had there not existed a

strong desire to maintain a particular doctrine of Confirmation, the inspiration of which lies in later liturgical developments rather than in the New Testament writings.” (ibid., p.276)

The question of regeneration comes into focus in Titus 3:5ff. Here baptism is spoken of as “*the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...*” In John 3:6 it is emphasized saying, “*that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,*” and again in v.8, “*The wind blows where it wishes, so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*” Baptism is thus represented as the occasion when the Spirit brings to new life him that believes in the Son of Man lifted up (John 3:14f).

10.6.6.4. Baptism and the Church

Baptism into Christ is baptism into the Church; for the Church is the Body of Christ.

“*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” (Gal 3:27)

The unity of the Body of Christ is not simply sociality but a *Koinonia* in the Spirit after the pattern of the *Koinonia* of the Blessed Trinity (Jn 17:21ff). The difficulty for us is to avoid the danger of extremes – of pressing the symbolism of the Body so that one practically deifies the Church, and of thinking exclusively of the members so that one forgets that the Body is Christ.” (ibid., p.281)

“Not even the richness of the symbol of the Body must be permitted to minimize the fact that there is a Redeemer and there are the redeemed, there is a Lord and there are his servants, there is a King and there are his subjects, there is a Judge and there are those to be judged – and judgment begins at the house of God! In every symbol representing the relationship of Christ and his people, including that of the Body, Christ dominates the scene. Our theological expositions of the relationship must never blur that priority.” (ibid., p.282)

“The really important fact, then, of which we have to take account is the indivisibility of the two aspects of baptism: it is baptism to Christ and into the Body. It is at once intensely personal and completely corporate, involving the believer in relationship simultaneously with the Head and with all the members of the Body.” (ibid. p.282)

10.6.6.5. Baptism and Ethics

At the heart of N.T. baptismal theology lies the conviction that baptism witnesses not just to a cleansing from the guilt of sin, but also to a release from the power of sin! Here is the essence of Romans 6ff...

10.6.6.6. Baptism and Hope

“The Church occupies a time that no prophet understood – ‘a time between the times’, as it has been described. ‘It is a period in which we may say that the Kingdom has come (since it came with the coming of Christ) and yet has still to come because the final consummation is not yet. Christ is present with us, yet not in a way in which He was present in the days of his flesh, and again not in the way in which we shall enjoy his immediate presence in the final consummation. In this interim period He is present with us through the Holy Spirit in the Church.

And in this interim period the Church is always looking back and looking forward. That is why the Church needs sacraments. And in both baptism and the Lord’s Supper the Church looks both back to the death and resurrection of Christ, which have to be reproduced in us, and forward to the full enjoyment of the Kingdom...” (ibid., p292)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (1 Peter 1:3)

Baptism means hope!

10.7. DOCTRINE of JUSTIFICATION

Introduction

Observe the contrast in frequency of occurrence between the N.T. words relating to the Atonement of Christ. *Propitiation* is used only four times in all the N.T. *Reconciliation* occurs in only five passages. What of “*justification*”?

“By contrast, he who would expound justification is confronted with eighty-one occurrences of the adjective *dikaias*, ninety-two of the noun *dikaiosisuna*, two of the noun *dikaiosis*, thirty-nine of the verb *dikaiao*, ten of the noun *dikaioima*, and five of the adverb *dikaios*.

The sheer frequency of the usage of this term in its varied forms, testifies strongly that we are

dealing with a concept of tremendous importance for the understanding of the Atonement and its application to the sinner.

The root meaning of the term is that of “justness” or “rightness”. This concept is not of something arbitrary, but of something that conforms to some standard of right.

“The righteous man is one who is adjudged right by such a standard, and righteousness indicates a state of having attained to the standard in question.” (*The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, Leon Morris, p.252)

10.7.1. Law and Judgment in the O.T.

“The thoughts of righteousness, justification and the rest are inextricably bound up with other concepts like those of judgment, pleading in the law court, and, especially, law itself. Even in a short treatment it is necessary to take some notice of this, for it has the effect of putting justification in its context. Justification is not an isolated concept. It is part of a whole way of viewing God and the world which sees in law a means of understanding the divine ordering of things. To the men of the Old Testament God was a God of law, and a very great deal in their religion cannot be understood if this is lost sight of.” (ibid., p.253)

“The holy Law is not the creation of God but His nature.”

(*The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought: A Theological Symposium*, London, P.T. Forsyth, 1903, p.79)

10.7.1.1. Law, as a category for the understanding of God’s ways

Consider Abraham’s question, “*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*” (Gen 18:25)

Here God was designated by the legal term, ‘Judge’. His relationship to the mankind described in legal categories. Abraham’s question gives expression to his certainty that God as Judge, would act in accordance with moral law. Abraham was confident of this.

In like manner, Jeremiah would say, “*Even the stork in the heavens knows her times, and the turtledove, swallow, and crane keep the time of their coming, but my people know not the rules of the LORD.*” (Jeremiah 8:7 ESV; “*judgment of the LORD*” KJV)

Judgment, rules, law are as natural to the LORD as the movement and instincts of the birds are to them.

10.7.1.2. Judgment and Justification are often connected in Scripture.

“*Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.*” (Psalm 143:2)

“If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.” (Deut 25:1) Observe that justification is part of the whole process of judgment. In this passage, it is the declaration in favour of a party to a law-suit.

Many other like passages clearly establish that righteousness or justification is in the Old Testament woven together with legal conceptions.

10.7.2. Old Testament Terms

Torah (#8451) The basic idea is ‘law’, and one that is closely associated with Yahweh.

Shaphat (#8199) The overwhelming usage of this term points to the understanding that Yahweh has a deep interest in law. God makes ‘a statute for the rain’ (Job 28:26). He made an ‘everlasting statute’ governing the limits of the sea (Jeremiah 5:22). “Law is thus not simply a demand that God makes on His people: it is the way in which He administers His universe. He can be relied to act according to law.” (ibid., p255)

Mishpat (#4941) This word is connected with Yahweh about 180 times, often in the sense of ‘laws’. “It may be used more generally, sometimes linked with the righteousness words, e.g. ‘Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God; thy judgments are a great deep’ (Ps.36:6); ‘I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord’ (Je. 9:24). Here judgment and righteousness seem to be part of the essential nature of the Lord.” (ibid., p.255)

The Old Testament consistently thinks of a God who works by the method of law. This is not the conception of one or two writers but is found everywhere.

10.7.3. *DIKAIOS* in the SEPTUAGINT

Dikaios is the translation the LXX gave *Tsedeq* (#6664); the English translates it as “Righteousness” or “Justification”.

The basic meaning of this Hebrew root is the idea of ‘straightness’.

“*Tsedeq*, with its kindred words, signifies that standard which God maintains in this world. It is the norm by which all must be judged. What this norm is, depends entirely upon the Nature of God.’ If this is so, then the idea of righteousness is conformity to God’s standard, and justification will be a process in which this conformity is either attained, or declared to be attained.” (ibid., p259)

The concept is a forensic meaning; a declaration or acquittal. The meaning is to declare righteous rather than to make righteous.

“That a declaratory process rather than a making righteous is meant is clear from the fact that the verb is applied to Jehovah (Ps. 51:4), for it is an impossible thought that He should be ‘made righteous’ in any sense other than ‘made righteous before men’ or ‘declared righteous’.” (ibid. p.260)

“Finally, let us notice the important words of the psalmist: ‘enter not into judgement with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified’ (Ps. 143:2). Here we are face to face with the ultimate question in religion, and the conclusion is that it is impossible for any man to have confidence in his standing before God on the ground of his deeds.” (ibid. p.260)

10.7.4. The righteousness of men

When applied to mankind, the word righteousness reveals an essentially forensic significance. [Forensic = “legal proceedings”]

“The righteous are those acquitted at the bar of God’s justice, and righteousness is the standing of those so acquitted.” (ibid. p.260)

“Thus J. Skinner explains his view that in the Old Testament ‘the forensic element preponderates’ in the idea of righteousness by saying: ‘what is meant is that questions of right and wrong were habitually regarded from a legal point of view as matters to be settled by a judge, and that this point of view is emphasized in the words derived from *tsdq*. This, indeed, is characteristic of the Heb. Conception of righteousness in all its developments: whether it be a moral quality or a religious status, it is apt to be looked on as in itself controvertible and incomplete until it has been confirmed by what is equivalent to a judicial sentence.’ The Hebrew concept is not grasped by making a facile equation with the Greek *dikaïosuna* or the English ‘righteousness’; it is not an ethical term, but a religious. It takes its origin in the forensic sphere and makes its home in the law of God.” (ibid. p.260-261)

Consider Isaiah 5:23 which pronounces a woe on those who “*take away the righteousness of the righteous from him.*” Clearly a forensic and not a moral understanding is in view here.

The book of Job uses the words in a forensic manner often.

“*Behold I have prepared my case; I know that I shall be in the right*” (Job 13:18)

“*Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?*” (Job 40:8)

“*But how can a man be in the right before God?*” (Job 9:2)

In each passage the thing in view is one’s standing with the LORD. Furthermore, the implication is that man is completely unable on his own, of coming to that right or just

standing.

10.7.5. The righteousness of God

The O.T. consistently depicts Jehovah as a just or righteous God.

“The heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is Judge.” (Psalm 50:6)

“...before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.” (Psalms 96:13)

“But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.” (Isaiah 5:16)

The O.T. abounds, both implicitly and explicitly, with the idea that God as the righteous Judge demands right living on the part of men. He has placed His law before us and expects us to walk in it.

Micah 6:8 & Deut 6

10.7.6. JUSTIFICATION in the New Testament

Definition

Justification is God’s declaration that we are legally righteous (straight) in His sight. The righteous man is the one who is accepted before God. He is pronounced in conformity with the standard.

“Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.” (Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem, p.723)

Justification “refers to the declaration of God to a repentant sinner that all his sins are forgiven, he is acquitted, the wrath of the judge is removed and he stands righteous before God. God announces that something has been taken away and something has been added. Sins have been taken away. And a new righteousness has been given.” (John Piper in sermon entitled, “Those He Called He Also Justified”; October 27, 1985)

10.7.6.1. Old Testament Foundations

“In the Scriptures ‘righteousness’ does not have exactly the same meaning as it has come to have in western civilization of the twentieth century, or that it had in profane Greek of the

first.” (*The Apostolic Preaching of the Gospel*, Leon Morris, p.269)

“While the N.T. teaches the highest of ethical standards, and while these standards may at times be indicated by words from the righteousness word-group, yet the primary meaning of the word-group is to be derived from Hebrew rather than Greek roots.” (ibid)

The O.T. viewed the righteous man as the one who is accepted before God, the one who has been given the verdict of acquittal.

Now in point of fact, once declared righteous, that man is now in a new relationship and a new life in which conformity to ethical and moral standards has great priority.

“It may be true that, ultimately, the Christian comes to practice what is involved in the Greek understanding of *dikaïosuna*, but his starting-point is the Hebrew idea. The New Testament can scarcely be understood until that is realized.” (ibid., p270)

10.7.6.2. Justification involves a forensic/legal declaration by God

This idea of a legal declaration is very strong in Romans 8:33-34 where justification is contrasted with condemnation. “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn?” To condemn is to make a pronouncement. The opposite of such negative pronouncement is justification, which, in this passage, has the idea of declaring someone not guilty.

Consider Deuteronomy 25:1, “*If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked...*” Clearly what is not meant here, by ‘justify’, is that the judges are making someone good internally. Such is not the work of judges.

Consider Proverb 17:15, “*He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD.*” Here the idea of a legal declaration is very clear.

Reformed theologian John Murray makes a key point on this issue

“Regeneration is an act of God in us; justification is a judgment of God with respect to us. The distinction is like that of the distinction between the act of a surgeon and the act of a judge. The surgeon, when he removes an inward cancer, does something in us. That is not what a judge does – he gives a verdict regarding our judicial status. If we are innocent he declares accordingly... The purity of the gospel is bound up with the recognition of this distinction. If justification is confused with regeneration or sanctification, then the door is opened for the perversion of the gospel at its center. Justification is still the article of the standing or falling of the Church.” (*Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, John Murray, p.121)

“It is important to emphasize that this legal declaration in itself does not change our internal

nature or character at all. In this sense of ‘justify,’ God issues a legal declaration about us. This is why theologians have also said that justification is forensic, where the word forensic means ‘having to do with legal proceedings.’” (Grudem, p.724)

10.7.6.3. Justification means the Imputation of our Sins to Christ

Sacred Scripture

“We have now been justified by his blood” (Romans 5:9)

“[We] are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”
(Romans 3:24)

“We hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.” (Romans 3:28)

Being justified before God and being forgiven by God are not the identical

“To be justified in a courtroom is not the same as being forgiven. Being forgiven implies that I am guilty and my crime is not counted. Being justified implies that I have been tried and found innocent. My claim is just. I am vindicated. The judge says, ‘Not guilty.’”

Justifying is a legal act

“It means declaring someone to be just. It is a verdict. The verdict of justification does not make a person just. It declares a person just. It is based on someone actually being just. We can see this most clearly when the Bible tells us that, in response to Jesus’ teaching, the people ‘justified’ God (Luke 7:29). This does not mean they made God just (since he already was). It means they declared God to be just.

The moral change we undergo when we trust Christ is not justification.

“The bible usually calls that sanctification – the process of becoming good. Justification is not that process. It is not a process at all. It is a declaration that happens in a moment. A verdict: Just! Righteous!”

“The ordinary way to be justified in a human court is to keep the law. In that case the jury and the judge simply declare what is true of you: You kept the law. They justify you. But in the courtroom of God, we have not kept the law. Therefore, justification, on ordinary terms, is hopeless. The Bible even says, ‘He who justifies the wicked [is] an abomination to the LORD’ (Proverbs 17:15). And yet, amazingly, because of Christ, it also says God ‘justifies the ungodly’ who trust in his grace (Romans 4:5). God does what looks abominable.

Why is God’s justification of us not abominable?

“As the Bible puts it, how can God ‘be just and the justifier of the one who [simply!] has faith in Jesus’ (Romans 3:26)? It is not abominable for God to justify the ungodly who trust

him, for two reasons.

One is that Christ shed his blood to cancel the guilt of our crime. So it says, ‘We have now been justified by his blood’ (Romans 5:9). But that is only the removal of guilt. That does not declare us righteous. Canceling our failures to keep the law is not the same as declaring us to be a law-keeper.

When a teacher cancels from the record an exam that got an F, it’s not the same as declaring it an A. If the bank were to forgive me the debts on my account, that would not be the same as declaring me rich. The cancellation must happen. That is essential to justification. But there is more. There is another reason why it is not abominable for God to justify the ungodly by faith.”

10.7.6.4. Justification means the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness to us

Sacred Scripture

“Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedience to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:8)

“For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19)

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

“...not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ.” (Philippians 3:9)

“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness...” (Isaiah 61:10)

“Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” And to him he said, “Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.” (Zechariah 3:3-4)

Justification is not merely the cancellation of my unrighteousness. It is also the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to me

I do not have a righteousness that commends me to God. My claim before God is that named by Paul in Philippians 3:9

“This is Christ’s righteousness. It is imputed to me. That means Christ fulfilled all righteousness perfectly; and then that righteousness was reckoned to be mine, when I trusted in him. I was counted righteous. God looked on Christ’s perfect righteousness, and he

declared me to be righteous with the righteousness of Christ.

So there are two reasons why it is not abominable for God to justify the ungodly
(Romans 4:5).

First, the death of Christ paid the debt of our unrighteousness. Second, the obedience of Christ provided the righteousness we needed to be justified in God's court. The demands of God for entrance into eternal life are not merely that our unrighteousness be canceled, but that our perfect righteousness be established.

The suffering and death of Christ is the basis of both. His suffering is the suffering that our unrighteousness deserved. *'He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities'* (Isaiah 53:5). But his suffering and death were also the climax and completion of the obedience that became the basis of our justification. He was *'obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross'* (Philippians 2:8). His death was the pinnacle of his obedience." This may well be what the Bible refers to when it says, *"For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."* (Romans 5:17)

Therefore, Christ's death became the basis of our pardon and our perfection. *'For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God'* (2 Corinthians 5:21). What does it mean that God made the sinless Christ to be sin? It means our sin was imputed to him, and thus he became our pardon. And what does it mean that we (who are sinners) become the righteousness of God in Christ? It means, similarly, that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, and thus he became our perfection.

"May Christ be honored for his whole achievement in suffering and dying! Both the work of pardoning our sin, and the work of providing our righteousness. Let us admire him and treasure him and trust him for this great achievement." (from John Piper, *Fifty Reasons Why Christ had to Die*)

10.7.6.5. Practical Implications

For Worship

"The Solid Rock" (Edward Mote)

My hope is built on nothing less,
Than Jesus' blood & righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus Name.

When he shall come with trumpet sound,

O may I then in Him be found.
Dressed in his righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the Throne.

For Christian Living

First, this doctrine gives us genuine hope. For if my salvation is based entirely on Christ Jesus' righteousness and blood sacrifice then I am secure.

Second, this doctrine gives us confidence that God will never, for all eternity, make us pay the penalty of sins forgiven by Christ's meritorious sacrifice.

Third, this doctrine is the foundation of the command that we never require a "debt" be paid to us by one whose debts have already been paid by Jesus' blood. If the blood of the Son of God was shed for that sin just committed against me, what further could I possibly want to exact in payment than what Jesus' blood has already achieved? Am I saying His death was not sufficient? His agony not enough that I must now demand yes even seek an exacting today from the one who has wronged me?