

# THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTOLOGY

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# CHRISTOLOGY

(The Study of Jesus Christ)

**HIS PERSON**  
(the ontological dimension)

FULL DEITY      FULL HUMANITY  
(two natures/one personality)

**HIS WORK**  
(the functional dimension)

SINLESS LIFE

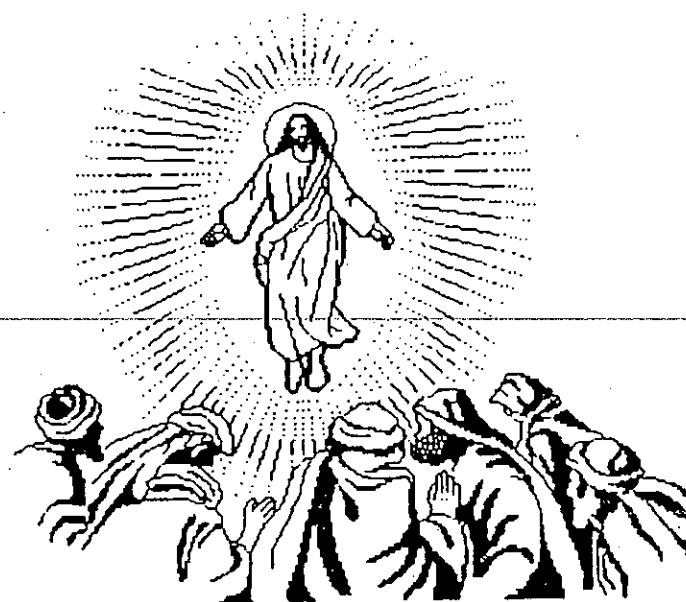
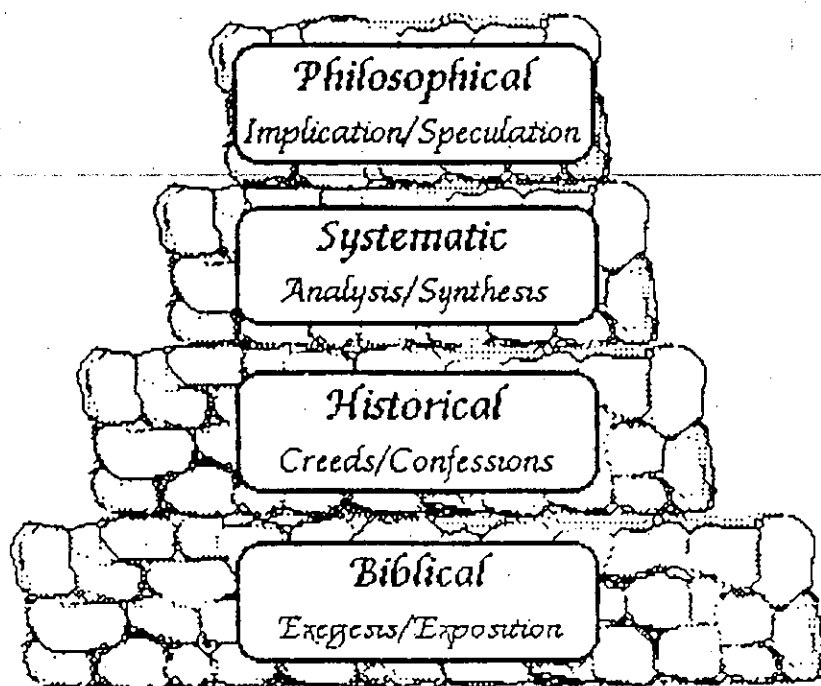
BODILY RESURRECTION

VICARIOUS DEATH

- atonement
- propitiation  
(satisfaction)
- reconciliation
- substitution

- justification
- redemption
- ransom
- sacrifice
- example

## THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO CHRISTOLOGY





# When the Jesus Seminar Meets Jesus Under Fire: On Whose Side Does History Fall?

DARRELL L. BOCK

## The Jesus Seminar in Context

Anyone familiar with Jesus Studies knows that there has been a major resurgence in interest. To use a secular expression: "business is up." The days of the Bultmannian view that there is little that we can know or say about Jesus are long gone.<sup>1</sup> So convinced was he of the supposed fact that we could know little about Jesus that his *Theology of the New Testament* discussed the theology of Jesus in thirty pages out of over six hundred.<sup>2</sup> His students became so disenchanted with this approach that Ernst Käsemann launched the second quest for the historical Jesus, which was rapidly followed and paralleled by a third.

The first quest is dated from Reimarus' *Fragments* in 1778 to Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, written in 1906. Schweitzer pronounced the first quest (a skeptical one that desired to sever the history of Jesus from dogmatic considerations) a failure. He argued that Jesus needed to be relocated within first century Judaism and especially within apocalyptic.

The second quest started with Käsemann's now famous 1953 address, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus."<sup>3</sup> The second quest still continues today, often fueled by the

assumptions of source, form, redaction, and tradition criticism and especially a belief that Mark tells us more about the early church than it does about Jesus, much along the line William Wrede laid out in 1901 in *The Messianic Secret*.<sup>4</sup>

The third quest argues that a portrait of Jesus as it historically fits into first century Judaism can be defended. The third quest does not ignore the source, form, redactional, and tradition critical tools; but it has asked hard questions about how and when they should be applied to this discussion. It has also stressed that the sayings of Jesus need to be placed in a historical context and assessed in that context rather than in a piecemeal, atomized fashion. Thus the third quest has highlighted the events and actions of Jesus as much as the sayings material, while asking what light might be shed by considering how the event and saying interact with one another. This third quest did not begin with a single work that launched it, as much as it emerged suddenly on three continents in the mid-sixties to seventies.<sup>5</sup> Where the second quest argues that the portrait of Jesus is mostly a theological overlay of the early church, the third argues that there is much in the gospels that tells us about

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<sup>1</sup>In 1926 Bultmann wrote, "I do indeed think that we can know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus." *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Scribners, 1958 ed.), 8. In citing German works, I name English editions rather than the originals to make the argument accessible to those who do not work with German.

<sup>2</sup>Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Scribner's, 1951), 3-32. To say thirty pages is generous. The last six pages explain why Bultmann thinks that Jesus did not make messianic claims. He ties three themes to Jesus: 1) an announcement of the kingdom of God's coming with a call for readiness to God's demand before the End, 2) a protest against Jewish legalism, and 3) his declaration of the nearness of God in demand and forgiveness which places individuals at the brink of the End.

<sup>3</sup>E. Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1964 ed.), 15-47.

<sup>4</sup>W. Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (Greenwood S.C.: Attic Press, 1971 ed.).

<sup>5</sup>In Germany, Otto Betz, *What Do We Know about Jesus?* (London: SCM, 1968 trans. of 1965 ed.) and Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (New York: Crossroad, 1981 trans. of 1968 ed.) emphasize Jewish backgrounds in the study of Jesus, an approach with a rich German heritage dating back to Adolf Schlatter, Joachim Jeremias, and Otto Michel. In Britain, S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1967) and the Jewish scholar, Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973) launched the discussion. In North America, Ben Meyer's *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979) laid important methodological ground. Meyer called his approach "critical realism" in contrast to more radically critical approaches. Major third questers today include Norman Wright, Bruce Chilton, Earle Ellis, Craig Evans and John Meier. The relative newness of the third quest means that it is only now getting the press it deserves.

what Jesus did and taught.<sup>6</sup>

Tom Wright speaks of a network of *autobahn*, which currently carries the Jesus Study traffic.<sup>7</sup> The second quest runs on the *Wredebahn* and is marked by thoroughgoing skepticism, while the third travels the *Schweitzerbahn*, and is often marked by a thoroughgoing eschatology, rooted in first century Jewish apocalyptic. In the midst of the frantic activity of the two quests, we now possess multiple competing portraits of Jesus which picture him from a full blown revolutionary, to a Cynic-like figure, to a reforming teacher of Judaism, to a prophet, to a restorer/reformer of Israel, and to a messianic claimant.<sup>8</sup>

It is into this interstate system with its multiple options that the Jesus Seminar appeared in the mid-eighties and emerged full fledged with its highly visible publication of *The Five Gospels* in 1993.<sup>9</sup> It argued that a representative committee of New Testament scholars had come together to determine what Jesus actually did say, rating each saying in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Thomas according to a now famous authenticity color code.<sup>10</sup> Red means Jesus said exactly what the Gospels say he said (at least that the Greek reflects something pretty close to what originally would have been said in Aramaic). Pink indicates he said something very close to that. Grey means the words were that of the evangelist, but that it might have roots in Jesus' teaching. Black means the saying had no connection to Jesus at all; they were simply the words and theology of the early church.

The results are also well known. Only eighteen percent of the sayings received a red or pink rating. Approximately fifty percent were rated black. In stating their own conclusion, the Seminar argued that eighty two percent of the words attributed to Jesus do not come from him.<sup>11</sup> Other conclusions about Jesus argued that he was not interested in

eschatology or judgment (placing the seminar on the *Wredebahn*), that he was largely a teacher of aphorisms and parables, and that he is best characterized as a laconic sage.<sup>12</sup> Much of what the church (and the gospels) say about Jesus is the early church's work, not from Jesus himself.

An evangelical response to which I contributed followed two years later.<sup>13</sup> I argued, with the Seminar, that orality was a factor that must be taken seriously in the gospel tradition's development, but that it must be examined alongside the Jewish handling of tradition. In other words, the gospels and the "historical Jesus question" must be placed in a historical context. Jewish culture has a history of transmitting tradition. We see it in the care with which the Hebrew scriptures were copied, as Qumran has so vividly shown us. We see it in the long liturgical prayers, like the *Eighteen Benedictions*, which Jews memorized. Philo discusses it in his *Embassy to Gaius* 210, where he discusses how Jews guard their laws and customs. This background shows that it is fair to characterize Jewish culture as a "culture of memory."<sup>14</sup> They knew how to pass on tradition with care.

I then defended a distinction in assessing the sayings material and assessing their historical value, while discussing how one works with history and historical perspective. The distinction I made was between the *ipsissima verba* ("the very words") of Jesus and the *ipsissima vox* ("the very voice of Jesus"). This distinction, by the way, is not the creation of fundamentalist scholars. Its roots lie in the work of Joachim Jeremias, who knew about as much about first century Judaism, Aramaic, and

<sup>6</sup>N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 3-124.

<sup>7</sup>Wright actually develops a metaphor originated by Norman Perrin. Wright also notes that some individuals travel on both routes, so the categorization is not always airtight.

<sup>8</sup>For a review of these various options, see B. Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995).

<sup>9</sup>Robert Funk, Roy Hoover and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Polebridge, 1993).

<sup>10</sup>Richard Hays, "The Corrected Jesus," *First Things* 43 (May, 1994):43-48 questions how representative the seminar is on p. 47, "Not one member of the New Testament faculty from Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Duke, University of Chicago, Union Theological Seminary, Vanderbilt, SMU, or Catholic University is involved in this project. It probably goes without saying that the faculties of evangelical seminaries are not represented here." I know that only a handful of evangelicals participated at all. The point is that despite the Seminar's open invitation for participants, the groups' actual makeup is quite selective with graduates of Harvard and Claremont predominating. The claim to be representative is questionable.

<sup>11</sup>*The Five Gospels*, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup>All of this appears in the introduction to the *Five Gospels*, pp. 1-37, which presents their rules of evidence, including seven pillars which I have assessed elsewhere (*Luke* 9:51-24:53. BECNT vol. 3b [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 1961-66). They also explain their view of the rules of oral evidence. These rules cite no ancient parallels beyond a reference to Thucydides (460-400 BCE), *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22.1 (431-404 BCE). The judgments they make about Jesus' style of teaching and themes show that the rules were determined ahead of time by a series of judgments one can question. In fact, even the way they appeal to Thucydides as evidencing a loose use of oral tradition can be challenged as the work of the classical scholar Charles Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 143-68 shows. Fornara's work is important because he is not discussing the biblical texts or issues at all, but speaks strictly as a classicist about ancient historiography.

<sup>13</sup>Michael J. Wilkins, J. P. Moreland, *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995). My essay was, "The Words of Jesus in the Gospels: Live, Jive, or Memorex?"

<sup>14</sup>So correctly, R. Riesner, "Jesus as Preacher and Teacher," *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, JSNTMS 64, ed. Henry Wansbrough (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 185-210. For a discussion of the flexibility of the wording of Jesus' sayings considered against the background of cultures of orality, see C. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 28-31.

orality as anyone in his day.<sup>15</sup> My major point was that the gospels give us the voice of Jesus, even when they do not give us his words, and that this voice also gives us access to the historical Jesus. In fact, I argued that the gospels do *not always* give us his words and often summarize in a way that gives us the gist of his teaching.

My charge was that the Seminar exhibited historical naiveté in failing to do serious work with either the nature of Jewish ancient culture or with the complexities of doing historical work with ancient sources. These flaws rendered the seminar's results questionable, especially their conclusion that over half of the gospel material has no connection to Jesus. As an evangelical, I was *not* arguing that everything in the gospels be printed in red. In fact a major burden of my article was to argue everything *cannot* be put in red.<sup>16</sup> Rather I argued that a close look at the gospel tradition and its wording (and I considered numerous examples) shows that the voice/words distinction is an important consideration when discussing the historical Jesus. It is a category the seminar seems to underplay, especially when it works with those sayings colored in grey.<sup>17</sup>

Since my article in *Jesus Under Fire*, I have also written a two volume commentary on Luke.<sup>18</sup> In it I have examined the Seminar's work on the Lucan sayings pericope by pericope. Their assessment of the Lucan material rendered the sayings with the distribution of 4% red, 23% pink, 22% grey, and 51% black—percentages pretty similar to the other synoptic gospels. The commentary closed with an excursus on the Jesus Seminar's work in Luke, where I assessed their seven pillars, and the major issues hidden within them. For example, pillar 5 states that the noneschatological Jesus of aphorisms and parables should be separated from the eschatological Jesus.<sup>19</sup> This premise is decidedly *not* a received premise of New Testament gospel study, and to argue that it is distorts the history of Jesus studies. The effect of this premise alone is that all the gospels' teaching

on judgment or any elements that parallel the prophet's call to renewal based upon the hope of God's ultimate saving work are erased from the lips of Jesus by *a priori* definition. I concluded, "The pillars function like a tightly knit strainer that allows little to get through the process of assessment. If we treated other ancient works with similar standards, there would be little we could say about ancient history."<sup>20</sup>

So why this essay? Roy Hoover, an editor of the *Five Gospels*, wrote a review of *Jesus Under Fire*.<sup>21</sup> It treats only my essay since it stands at the center of this debate over authenticity and Jesus. My goal is to summarize his review and then assess it through the eyes of one evangelical New Testament person in the middle of the discussion.

### Hoover's Review of *Jesus Under Fire*

The best way to present Hoover's remarks is to have him speak for himself. On my attempt to distinguish the "voice" as reflected in the gospel writers' summaries of Jesus' teaching, Hoover says,

The difference between Professor Bock's conception of what the search for the historical Jesus is about and that of most critical scholars, including the Fellows of the Jesus Seminar, is apparent in his definition of Jesus' "voice." It would be more historically accurate to call what Bock calls the "voice" of Jesus, the "voice" of the early church. It is in the early church's formulations of their faith that Bock finds the full meaning of what Jesus taught, not in a recovery of what Jesus said on his own. That Jesus meant "more" than he actually said is what his followers grasped after Easter, and this "more" is what Bock takes to be Jesus' authentic "voice." Historically viewed, what Bock claims is Jesus' "voice" is actually early Christian interpretation [*sic*].

When members of the Jesus Seminar refer to Jesus' "voice," they refer to the characteristic stance and style of Jesus' teaching before Easter, not to the retrospective theological meaning conferred upon Jesus' life and teaching by his followers after Easter. Bock's definition of Jesus' "voice" refers to the early history of Christian thought, rather than to a search for the historical Jesus. His paramount interest, it seems clear, is Jesus' life's meaning, not his life history. Jesus does not speak for himself in Bock's treatment of his teaching; the Gospel authors speak for him. They are the ones who most adequately know what Jesus meant.

Noting that all my examples in the *Jesus Under Fire* isolated confessional examples, he says,

These are the sayings that matter, in Bock's view; even though parables and aphorisms constitute about seventy percent of the content of sayings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, according to one recently published

<sup>15</sup>J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribners, 1971), 1-37. In contrast to Bultmann's thirty pages, Jeremias spends three hundred pages on the teaching of Jesus.

<sup>16</sup>This point is clearly noted in a review by Dick France of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, in *JETS* 39 (1996): 689. In fact, I would argue that even grey categories can tell us something about the historical Jesus.

<sup>17</sup>Others have commented in full about how the manner of voting in the seminar skewed the results toward grey and black. See the critiques of B. Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 45-46, and Luke T. Johnson, *The Real Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996) 21-22. In fact, a Seminar member told me that each saying started out black and had to be argued up the color scale toward authenticity. Again the rules helped to determine the result. If better voting methods were chosen and a different approach to ancient oral culture and history, the results might look very different.

<sup>18</sup>*Luke 1:1-9:50 and Luke 9:51-24:53* BECNT, vols. 3a, b (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994, 1996).

<sup>19</sup>Note how obviously the *Wredebahn* is asserted here as a given!

<sup>20</sup>*Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1964-65.

<sup>21</sup>*The Journal for Higher Criticism* 3 (1996): 310-15, produced at Drew University.

estimate, not one of them is mentioned in this discussion of his words. In *The Five Gospels* the first two of the sayings Bock chooses to support his claims are not color-coded at all by the Jesus Seminar, since they are not sayings attributed to Jesus; the third is colored black, because the Seminar regarded it as almost certainly the creation of the Gospel authors, not a saying of the historical Jesus. It seems likely, on the other hand, that Professor Bock would have colored each of his three choices red, since they express what he believes is the truth about the historical Jesus.<sup>22</sup>

On my motive in writing he declares,

What, in their view, the Jesus Seminar denies—"the biblical portrait of Jesus found in the New Testament" (p. 3)—they want to defend. Their intention, in other words, is to defend the reliability of the Gospels as authoritative scriptures, not examine them as sources in which one may find historical evidence.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, in looking at my critique of the Seminar's use of the criteria of authenticity, he gets to his central observation and complaint,

Professor Bock's discussion of the criteria of authenticity ignores the fresh and nuanced presentation of these in the introduction to *The Five Gospels* as "rules of evidence," and resorts to older definitions of three criteria—dissimilarity, multiple attestation, and coherence. He claims that the Seminar both misconstrues these, as he defines [*sic*] them, and fails to use them consistently. Professor Bock's discussion of the criteria of historical authenticity seems to me to be untouched by historical consciousness. Son of Man christology together with the idea of Jesus' death as a sacrifice for sin and a ransom for many is the ruling criterion of authenticity for him. Historical matters are

merely aids to the vindication of this messianic and redemptive meaning. With history thus safely subordinated to theology, it is easy for Professor Bock to see these theological themes as authentic elements of the teaching of the Jesus of history, and easy also for him to see flaws in the Jesus Seminar's methodology and assessments.

Bock's discussion of the criteria of authenticity shows that what really is at issue between him (and his colleagues) and the Fellows of the Jesus Seminar is not likely to be clarified by a debate about criteria. At bottom, what distinguishes the scholars of the Jesus Seminar from the scholars who have contributed to *Jesus Under Fire* is not so much different judgments about the criteria of authenticity (or "rules of evidence"), as a different conception of the meaning of authenticity. That is, what distinguishes the two books is the difference, as Van A. Harvey characterized it thirty years ago, between a devotion to the ethic of religious belief and the authority of tradition, on the one hand, and a commitment to the ethic of critical judgment and historical knowledge, on the other. Within these ethical universes both the role of the historian and the nature of historical evidence are understood differently . . .

From the perspective of a scholar who is committed to the ethic of critical judgment and historical knowledge, Professor Bock's discussion of the authentic words of Jesus is the work of a scholar who has abdicated his role as critical historian in order to mediate a traditional form of belief. What we see in his treatment of Jesus' sayings is not reason in search of historical truth, but reason claiming historical support for religious belief.

So Hoover responds. *Jesus Seminar* meets *Jesus Under Fire*. The assessment is that faith ignores history. Critical judgment and historical knowledge (read white hats) have come against religious belief and tradition (read black hats). In defending the faith, Hoover claims, history is not served. Is that the case?

### Assessing Hoover's Argument

I take Hoover's arguments in reverse order. My work in evaluating the Seminar has not ignored the "fresh and nuanced presentation" of criteria—I questioned, as would most New Testament scholars, the excessively early date the Seminar gave to the Gospel of Thomas (my pp. 89-90). Richard Hays of Duke calls this "a shaky element in their methodological foundation."<sup>24</sup> This Thomas element is part of the historical reason the Seminar appeals to an aphoristic

<sup>22</sup>I used the voice at the baptism, Peter's confession of Jesus at Caesarea Philippi, and Jesus' reply to the High Priest. I selected these to show that the same principles of recording apply to gospel discourse material, even when the speaker is not Jesus, a point I noted in the essay (note my p. 86). I also argued quite clearly that there is difference of wording within the parallels, so that a rating of red, if such sayings had been included, would *not* be appropriate here in some of the wording. Thus, my point was to illustrate the slight variations that do exist between recorded sayings, but *not* in ways that undercut the fundamental point of what was said by Jesus. He also fails to note the saying example I used from Luke 5:33-39 to show inconsistency in the Seminar's using the critical principle of dissimilarity. This Luke 5 passage represented one of the aphorisms he said that he wished I would have considered. Apparently, he missed it. Finally, I highlighted confessional statements, because here is where the differences are most evident. I regard his complaint as a misrepresentation of my argument (a misguided attempt to construe motive), which is why I note it here, and not in the later response on substantive issues.

<sup>23</sup>The reference to p. 3 is to the introductory essay in *Jesus Under Fire*.

<sup>24</sup>"The Corrected Jesus," *First Things* 43 (May, 1994): 44-45. See Robert Grant and David Noel Freedman, *The Secret Sayings of Jesus* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993 reprinting of 1960 ed). These two expert historians of first century Palestine analyze this gospel in detail and describe it on p. 20 as "our most significant witness to the early perversion of Christianity by those who wanted to create Jesus in their own image."

Jesus. However, why should we ignore the general portrait of the equally early, if not earlier, Mark (or the preponderance of the rest of the ancient gospel evidence) that indicates Jesus addressed people in more than simple proverbs? And considering Jesus' considerable reputation as a teacher-prophet, which virtually no one disputes, should we posit as a basic rule the idea that the only thing people remembered and passed on from Jesus were single sentences? Is it historically sensitive (or practically credible; for that matter) that a great teacher would only be remembered for his one-liners? Even the rabbinic tradition of Jewish culture knows of the recording of rabbinic parables and other pieces of discourse material.<sup>25</sup>

The other observation to make about Hoover's complaint here is the almost automatic disjunction he places between the presence of christological teaching and the possibility of real history. If a saying is christological, like the ransom or Son of Man saying, then it must *not* be authentic. Who is operating from a faith position here? When I cited the Son of Man saying or the ransom saying, I noted their authenticity was debated and then I proceeded to argue, based on the criteria of the Seminar, that dissimilarity was for the authenticity of the Son of Man saying; and that

*Considering Jesus' considerable reputation as a teacher-prophet, which virtually no one disputes, should we posit as a basic rule the idea that the only thing people remembered and passed on from Jesus were single sentences? Even the rabbinic tradition of Jewish culture knows of the recording of rabbinic parables and other pieces of discourse material.*

one could make a case on the grounds of multiple attestation for the ransom saying. Faith did not assume the saying was true. I attempted to argue for the saying's credibility on the basis of rules set up by the Seminar. The fact that such sayings could get through the strainer was significant. When Hoover refers to the "more nuanced" use of the criteria, he is appealing to additional, and in some cases, more idiosyncratic criteria (like pillar 5—the noneschatological Jesus), perhaps so that these kind of confessional statements do not make it through. But as I noted above, this is fixing the game's rules so the outcome is determined before the game is played. There is no history in this approach, only an excessively critical kind of criticism.

<sup>25</sup>For an important summary of the impact of the study of Jewish forms on the structure of gospel materials, see E. Earle Ellis, "The Historical Jesus and the Gospels," *Evangelium-Schriftauslegung-Kirche* ed. O. Hofius (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr-Siebeck, 1997), 94-106, esp. 101-04.

As a test I took a key cluster of sayings which are considered to be among the most authentic Jesus spoke, namely, the synoptic kingdom of God sayings.<sup>26</sup> They distribute as follows: triple tradition, 21x; Mt/Mk, 6x, Mt/Lk 17x; Mt only, 22x; Mk only 2x, Lk only, 9x, a total of 77 sayings units. In this key area where the likelihood thematically of authenticity is strong according to many in Jesus studies, the seminar's numbers came out as 32.5 sayings in black (42%), 19 in grey (25%), 21.5 in pink (28%), and 4 in red (5%). These numbers are only slightly better than the Seminar's general average evaluations with only one third of the sayings having a good claim to authenticity, while two thirds remain very suspect.<sup>27</sup> Even when one gives the benefit of the doubt and counts only sayings attested in more than one gospel, of which there are 44, the numbers show a low percentage of authenticity: 15.5 in black (35%); 11 in grey (25%), 14.5 in pink (33%), and 3 in red (7%). Under these special conditions, though the relative weight of authentic material doubles compared to Seminar averages for Jesus sayings considered as a whole, there is still an overwhelming amount of inauthentic material for what is perhaps the major theme of Jesus.<sup>28</sup> It is these kinds of specific results that raise questions about the Seminar's method.

As to whether I seek to defend the faith, I must come clean. I do, but it is because I have come to believe the faith is historically defensible as a historian, not because of some pre-ordained position of faith. I cannot prove every detail happened as a historian, but I believe a general portrait of Jesus' ministry can emerge from the gospels which explains why he was crucified and why a church was formed. My study in the gospels tells me these documents reflect good ancient historiography. I believe the gospels give us a solid glimpse of the real Jesus and that the Seminar's Jesus is historically incredible, for their Jesus would never have done enough to get the Jewish leadership and Rome to consider him enough of a threat to be worthy of crucifixion.

Finally, what of the "voice" issue? Is the voice Jesus' or the church's? Again it should be noted that Hoover's approach to this question assumes an either/or choice. His position seems to be, if it is the early church's words, then it is the early church's voice and *not* the voice of Jesus. Note the significant option that has been excluded *a priori*: there is no category to consider whether the early church has summarized Jesus' teaching in words that their context can better appreciate (usually a more Greco-Roman one for

<sup>26</sup>I used the concordance listing of N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1996), 663-66. I only counted those texts where Jesus spoke and the Seminar colored the saying. Split coloring led to a halved count. I did not count Luke 22:29-30 as a Mark-Luke parallel, since it appears in the Luke only list, which is where it belongs. Percentages that follow were rounded off.

<sup>27</sup>Remember for all sayings of Jesus, the aggregate for red and pink readings was 18%, while for Luke it was 27%. The major movement in this case is that a few more sayings show up as pink rather than grey or black.

<sup>28</sup>This test also shows how hard it is for singly attested sayings to get through the criteria.

books like Luke and Mark) and yet in a way that still reflects Jesus' voice. This option, it seems, is excluded by definition. Does this exclusion really honor the ethic of critical judgment and historical knowledge Hoover claims to uphold? It seems, rather, to ignore a historical possibility. Who is the traditionalist in this approach? One might argue that a critical tradition is being recited like a mantra: the gospels are the product of the early church (the second or third *Sitzen im Leben*) without ties or connection to Jesus (the first *Sitz im Leben*). The very point of my original essay and its historical appeal to orality in Jewish culture was to argue that early church wording does not automatically exclude connection to Jesus. Hoover's either/or is, for me, a both/and. My sense is that much gospel material, far more than the Seminar suggests, has this dual character.

The gospels themselves argue that the disciples did not understand all that Jesus said or did. They candidly admit, even embarrassingly so in some accounts, that later events helped them see what he was about and what he meant. This duality means that a gospel writer has the choice in telling his story historically of either telling us 1) what was meant and perceived to be meant at the time of the utterance, 2) what they came to see it meant as a result of later events or 3) to so mix the two that the ambiguity of expression might allow the word play to continue to function in the account. Hoover takes seriously none of these historical complexities.

Take, for example, a term like son of God.<sup>29</sup> This term might conceal a mere elective relationship to God and not be a unique confessional term at all. It could refer to a regal, messianic figure. In the later church, it takes on even more exalted significance. But what happens if the appreciation for a term like this grew as Jesus' ministry proceeded? I find this quite historically likely. When Peter confesses Jesus at Caesarea Philippi, I do not think he was thinking yet about Jesus as the ontological second person of the Trinity. He simply was acknowledging his view that Jesus was more than a prophet and the one through whom God was working to bring the realization of Israel's promise. When the later church attaches a more exalted sense to the term (in light of, I might add, really unique events), it can be seen as a proper extension of the original meaning in light of the vindication they argued had taken place. As I argued in the earlier essay, some elements of history are retrospective *and yet still historically connected* to an original utterance.<sup>30</sup> A reading of Peter's confession can exist which is historically

sensitive to both the original setting of the historical Jesus and to the later understanding of the church's confession of Jesus. I am defending the premise that, *it is more historically sensitive to appreciate this nuancing, work with it as a possibility, and look for this possible kind of linkage than to define it out of existence a priori before one pursues the discussion of the texts.* It takes a genuinely critical reading to see the texts and history this way. Both Hoover's oversimplified portrayal of my position and the position he defends seem to me to be excessively one dimensional, and thus historically uncritical. On one thing we agree, our two approaches appear to possess an inherent impasse.

When all is said and done, one must explain historically 1) the phenomena of Jesus' death as a regal or promise claimant, 2) the portrayal of the disciples as having stumbled their way through understanding Jesus during his ministry, and 3) their resilient death defying faith after he died.

These three points are historical lodestones, whose likelihood can be easily established. Only the most skeptical doubt Jesus was crucified. Crucifixion must have been through Rome for some social reason. Something of social significance led the Jewish leadership to ask Rome to execute him. The tradition which locates the cross's *titulus* as involving a messianic claim would be careless folly in a gospel written for Rome unless it had some base, as it would only give Rome more cause to consider persecuting Christians in a time when they were under pressure already. It must be noted, because it was true. It took courage for Mark to present this detail.

Similarly, the embarrassment of the stumbling portrayal of the disciples during Jesus' ministry in Mark has a ring of credibility about it, since most burgeoning movements do not seek to "trash" their current top leadership without a compelling reason. The reason, of course, is that it reflects the truth. (The fact that the other gospels often soften this note show its likely credibility.)

Finally, ancient testimony is full of the recognition that the early church had many heroic martyrs.

So we are left with two options, namely, the ones I noted to begin this essay. The first is that the early church made something out of Jesus that was never there in his ministry (the *Wredebahn*). The second is that Jesus made assertions about deliverance, promise and vindication which fit into the first century Jewish setting, that challenged that setting enough to lead to his death, and that gave the disciples hope when the tomb showed up empty. I believe the second option is the more likely explanation, and that for this reason the third quest, for all its varied expressions, has much promise in helping us understand the historical Jesus. In part for these historical reasons, I believe a more credible case can be made for Jesus from the premises argued for in *Jesus Under Fire* than can be made from the Jesus of the Jesus Seminar. It is possible to be critical in a historically sensitive way, have faith, and make a strong case for our access to Jesus. History stands on the side of the gospels' credible presentation of Jesus.

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<sup>29</sup>Again I choose a "confessional" term, not because I have a confessional, christological faith commitment to prove, but because it is the best kind of illustration of the problem, namely, the term might not have been confessional or as confessionally exalted in its original context (or at least it may not have been perceived that way) as it came to be. The historical complexity is present and exploited in the ambiguity. I think Son of Man functions similarly.

<sup>30</sup>It is the italicized portion of this sentence which Hoover wishes to define as out of bounds at the start, but in a way that short-circuits the full historical reality of what could be taking place in the gospel tradition. These points need to be argued through careful study, not *a priori* defined out of existence.

"We certainly do not get in the Hebrew Bible any teacher speaking of God as 'Father'...like the Jesus of Matthew. And this habitual and concentrated use rightly produces upon us an impression...we are moved by it to wish that we too could feel that doctrine, even as Jesus teaches that we ought to feel; and that we, too, could order our lives in its light and by its strength."<sup>9</sup>

**C.G. Montefiore**  
*Reform Jewish scholar*

"Jesus was utterly true to the Torah, as I myself hope to be. I even suspect that Jesus was even more true to the Torah than I, an Orthodox Jew."

"I accept the resurrection of Easter Sunday not as an invention of the community of disciples, but as a historical event.... I believe that the Christ event leads to a way of salvation which God has opened up in order to bring the Gentile world into the community of God's Israel."<sup>10</sup>

**Dr. Pinchas Lapide**  
*Orthodox scholar*

"Perhaps, too, in this enlightened age, as his mind expands, and he takes a comprehensive view of this period of progress, the pupil of Moses may ask himself, whether all the princes of the house of David have done so much for the Jews as that prince who was crucified on Calvary."<sup>10</sup>

**Benjamin Disraeli**  
*Former Prime Minister of Great Britain*

All quotations, except that of Dr. Pinchas Lapide, may be found in *The Messiahship of Jesus: Are Jews Changing Their Attitude Toward Jesus?* by Dr. Arthur Kac, revised edition, 1986 Baker Book House, Grand Rapids. Used by permission.

## Notes

1. Quoted from an interview by George Sylvester Viereck, "What Life Means to Einstein," *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 26, 1929, Curtis Publishing Company.
2. Quoted by Shalom Ben-Chorin in "The Image of Jesus in Modern Judaism," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 11, no. 3 (summer 1974), 408. Used by permission.
3. Sholem Asch, *One Destiny* (New York: Putnam Publishing Company, 1945). Used by permission.
4. From "Three Talks on Judaism," translated by Paul Levertoff in "Jewish Opinions About Jesus," *Der Weg* 7 no. 1 (January-February, 1933), 8.
5. Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 363, 368, 374, 413.
6. Hyman Enelow, *A Jewish View of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1920), 4-6. Reprinted by and used with permission of Bloch Publishing Company, New York.
7. Taken from an article written by Stephen S. Wise, "The Life and Teaching of Jesus the Jew," in *The Outlook*, June 7, 1913.
8. C.G. Montefiore, *The Old Testament and After*, (London, Macmillan, 1923), 205-6.
9. Reprinted by permission from *The Resurrection of Jesus*, by Pinchas Lapide, ©1983, Augsburg Publishing House.
10. Benjamin Disraeli, *Lord George Bentinck: A Political Biography* (London: Colburn, 1852), 363-64.

Martin Buber  
Albert Einstein  
Pinchas Lapide  
Stephen Wise  
Sholem Asch  
and others  
discuss

# The Most Famous Jew of All



**S**ome Jewish people have started to reassess their attitudes toward the most famous Jew of all time — Jesus of Nazareth.

The following quotations are taken from modern Jewish leaders and scholars whose thoughts reflect some of these changing attitudes.

"As a child I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene."<sup>1</sup>

**Albert Einstein**  
Nobel prize winner  
in physics; former professor,  
Princeton University

"Jesus is a genuine Jewish personality, all his struggles and works, his bearing and feeling, his speech and silence, bear the stamp of a Jewish style, the mark of Jewish idealism, of the best that was and is in Judaism. He was a Jew among Jews..."<sup>2</sup>

**Rabbi Leo Baeck**  
for many years the religious  
leader of German Jewry

"I couldn't help writing on Jesus. Since I first met Him, He has held my mind and heart.... I floundered a bit, at first; I was seeking that something for which so many of us search — that surety, that faith, that spiritual content in my living which would

bring me peace and through which I might help bring some peace to others. I found it in the Nazarene.... Everything He ever said or did has value for us today, and that is something you can say of no other man, alive or dead... He became the Light of the world. Why shouldn't I, a Jew, be proud of it?"<sup>3</sup>

**Sholem Asch**  
Yiddish novelist and author

"It is a peculiar manifestation of our exile-psychology that we permitted, and even aided in, the deletion of New Testament Messianism, that meaningful offshoot of our spiritual history. It was in a Jewish land, that this spiritual revolution was kindled; and Jews were those who had spread it all over the land...."

"We must overcome the superstitious fear which we harbor about the Messianic movement of Jesus, and we must place the movement where it belongs, namely, in the spiritual history of Judaism..."<sup>4</sup>

**Martin Buber**  
author and former professor  
at Hebrew University, Jerusalem

"Jesus was a Jew and a Jew he remained till his last breath. His one idea was to implant within his nation the idea of the coming of the Messiah and, by repentance and good works, hasten the 'end...'. In all this, Jesus is the most Jewish of Jews... more Jewish than Hillel.... From the standpoint of general humanity, he is, indeed, 'a light to the Gentiles'..."<sup>5</sup>

**Joseph Klausner**  
professor at Hebrew University,  
Jerusalem and author

"Jesus has become the most popular, the most studied, the most influential figure in the religious history of mankind.... No sensible Jew can be indifferent to the fact that a Jew should have had such a tremendous part in the religious education and direction of the human race...."

"Who can compute all that Jesus has meant to humanity? The love he has inspired, the solace he has given, the good he has engendered, the hope and joy he has kindled — all that is unequalled in human history.... The Jew cannot help glorying in what Jesus has meant to the world; nor can he help hoping that Jesus may yet serve as a bond between Jew and Christian, once his teaching is better known and the bane of misunderstanding at last is removed from his words and his ideal."<sup>6</sup>

**Rabbi Hyman Enelow**  
past president of the Central Conference  
of American Rabbis and author

"Neither Christian protest nor Jewish lamentation can annul the fact that Jesus was a Jew, an Hebrew of the Hebrews. Surely it is not wholly unfit that Jesus be reclaimed by those who have never unitedly nor organizedly denied him, though oft denied by his followers; that Jesus should not be so much *appropriated* by us as *assigned* to the place in Jewish life and Jewish history which is rightfully his own. Jesus was not only a Jew but he was *the* Jew, the Jew of Jews.... In that day when history shall be written in the light of truth, the people of Israel will be known not as Christ-killers, but as Christ-bearers; not as God-slayers, but as the God-bringers to the world."<sup>7</sup>

**Rabbi Stephen S. Wise**  
Zionist leader  
and founder of the Jewish Institute of Religion



**Title: An Evangelical Christology: A Digest**

**Author: Dr. Bernard Ramm, Professor of Christian Theology  
American Baptist Seminary of the West  
Berkeley, California**

**Date: Nelson, 1985. 229 pages**

This work is a survey defense of historic, evangelical Christology. The orthodoxy of Chalcedon is heartily defended as essential for the modern era.

### **Introduction**

Historic Christology has affirmed the following:

- (1) There is a true incarnation of the Logos, the second person of the Godhead. This is an assumption of the divine personality of the eternal Logos, so that they constitute, from the moment of the supernatural conception, one undivided life.
- (2) There is a distinction between nature and person in which nature denotes the totality of powers and qualities which constitute a being; while person is the ego, the self-conscious, self-asserting and acting subject.
- (3) The God-man is the result of the incarnation. Christ is not a double being, nor a compound being, nor a middle being, but he is the one Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- (4) In the incarnation there is not qualification or diminution of either the Godhead or the humanity of Christ, but each retains its own integrity.
- (5) It is a genuine hypostatic union, which is a real, supernatural, personal, and inseparable union.
- (6) The whole work of Christ is to be attributed to his person and not to the one or the other nature exclusively.
- (7) Jesus Christ exists only in an incarnation, and in this sense there is no Jesus of Nazareth possessing an independent life of his own (the Anhupostaisa and Enhupostasia). (pp 9-10).

## 1. Christology at The Center

Evangelical Christianity is a continuation of historic Christology. It is the Christology of The Apostles' Creed, Nicean-Constantinople Creed, Chalcedonian Creed, and Creed of Athanasius. This Christology was attacked by Fredrick Schleiermacher and has been losing ground ever since. "However, if there is a change in Christological doctrine, a change is mandated in all other doctrines. Christology is so central to Christian theology that to alter Christology is to alter all else." (p 16).

Basically there are two ways in which Christ can be present to the church & believer today: (1) Risen or only (2) remembered. Ramm notes however: "To speak of Faith in a dead Christ is impossible. A Christian cannot have a personal relationship with a totally human Jesus who died & never rose from the dead." (p 17). Tillich & Bultmann admit no such relationship is possible in their theology.

The attack on historic Christology brought to an apex in The Myth of God Incarnate (1977) can be summarized as follows:

- (1) It has been asserted that the Gospels are not substantial history, that when the criteria of scientific history are applied to the Gospels not much survives, nor is it possible to construct a valid biography of Jesus from the Gospels.
- (2) The critics of the Gospels have applied various critical methods to the study of the Gospels. They have concluded that most of the materials in the Gospels are the products of elaboration, patching up, editorializing, and theologizing.
- (3) Modern mentality is the product of many past forces and personalities. Some of these trends include: skepticism in philosophy, the development of scientific writing of history; the birth of psychology, sociology, and anthropology; the growth of the sciences; and the spilling over of these into technology and education that effects the masses. It is presumed that the supernatural elements in the Gospels are the result of mistakes or elaborations, or by some other process lost to us.
- (4) Theologians and biblical scholars do not do their work isolated from larger contexts of considerations. Such scholars always have in mind some larger view of the universe which has some bearing on their limited projects. To the degree that Christian theologians and New Testament scholars are influenced by the myth of evolution, to that the (sic) same degree they find it difficult to defend historic Christology.
- (5) The creeds of the early church were not attempts to reproduce simple biblical teaching but were thoroughly permeated with Greek philosophical or metaphysical concepts. If the New Testament and the creeds of later centuries are so saturated with this Hellenistic vocabulary, then the New Testament and

the creeds lose much of the traditional authority.

- (6) There is a tyranny of truth in the New Testament. God has honored the name of only one man whereby we can be saved (Acts 4:12). Further no person comes to the Father except through the Son (John 14:6). This is in direct conflict with so much modern mentality-religious or secular. Historic Christology cannot but collide with the mentality of the Enlightenment in its toleration for all religious opinions.
- (7) Both modern philosophy and modern science have moved away from attempting to create grand philosophical schemes. Historic Christology comes in direct conflict with this kind of mentality.
- (8) The long-range effect of the moral philosophy of Kant has had its influence on Christology. The tendency had been to shift theology away from dogmatic concerns to ethical issues.
- (9) Modern psychology has also created problems for historic Christology. There are new definitions of person, personality, and self-consciousness. Such new definitions involve tensions with the older terms used in historic Christology. It has been urged that modern psychology makes it very difficult to imagine the nature of a person's self-consciousness who is alleged to be both God and man. Others have raised questions about Jesus' sexual life and sexual fantasies.

## METHODOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

There are also questions of method.

- (1) Which has the priority in Christology: the work of Christ or the person of Christ? It is Bultmann in modern times who had argued most vigorously that Christology should be limited to the benefits of Christ (the work of Christ) and not be bothered with Christological speculations (the person of Christ). Berkouwer affirms that it is the person of Christ that gives the work of Christ its dignity, its worth, and its importance.
- (2) Does Christological investigation start with the earthly life of Jesus and from that attempt to determine what might be special about Jesus (von unten-Christology from below); or does Christology start with the eternal Son and follow his career from pre-existence to incarnation (von oben-Christology from above)? Most New Testament scholars prefer the von unten approach.

- (3) The most important decision in a method of approach to Christology hinges on the following issue: has critical methodology in New Testament studies become so technically sophisticated that only New Testament experts can write about Christology? Ramm does assert: the issues in Christology involve so many disciplines and decisions that the final assessment is a combined philosophical and theological decision. A theological decision without being informed by current New Testament studies is not a responsible assessment; nor is the assessment of the critical scholar who would ignore the inevitable philosophical, theological, and historical presuppositions in Christology.
- (4) Another decision with far reaching implications is whether or not one accepts:
  - A. The historic thesis concerning the gospels integrity, or
  - B. The radical thesis: the Gospels are primarily the creations of the early church communities and their scribes in which they reflect their own trials and experiences, and working backwards from that some of the authentic sayings and deeds of Jesus may be recovered.
- (5) Since the Enlightenment, the historian is skeptical of all historical data on principle and rejects outright all supernatural tales. This is proposed as radical difference in historical consciousness. It is not a matter of accepting or rejecting things piecemeal, but it is an entire and radical difference in mentality. On the other hand it is argued that the gap in historical consciousness is not all that great between ancient and modern historians. If the radical critic is right, namely that the Gospels are church creations with great elaboration of materials and deeply colored all the way through with mythological materials, then historic Christology with all its topics is dead. Such concepts as the pre-existence of Christ, incarnation, the virgin birth, sinless life, atoning sacrifice, bodily resurrection, ascension to heaven, and second coming are empty of meaning. All the great discussions about the deity of Christ, the nature of the incarnation, and the universal significance of Christ may have been learned, interesting, and vital in their times, but in reality there was no substance to them. From this perspective historic Christology was built upon many mistakes.

## 2. Creeds and Christology

The amount of Christological materials produced by the church Fathers is enormous.

### **The Apostles Creed**

- (1) It is a confessional statement, a soteriological affirmation.
- (2) It presumes the historical authenticity of the four Gospels.

- (3) It confesses Jesus as "God's Son and our Lord."
- (4) It also specifies what we call "the career" of Jesus.

### The Nicene Creed

It was Arius (250-336) of Alexandria who placed the church in its first great Christological debate. In two brief letters Arius declared that Jesus Christ is not the eternal, unbegotten, uncreated Son of God, rather he is the first and most glorious of God's creation and therefore yet a creature. Athanasius (296-373) responded with On the Incarnation of the Word, one of the classics of Christian theology. A later document is now traditionally known as the Creed of Nicea. A document was read at the Council of Chalcedon as the Creed of Nicea, which has also been called the Nicene-Constantinople Creed.

- (1) In every way the creed affirmed the deity of Christ so that no ambiguity could remain.
- (2) In order to state the deity of Christ in such a way that it could not be evaded by the Arians, the creed said that Christ was of the same substance (homoousios) as the Father. The term homoousios was controversial in the church. It was objected that it was not a biblical word. It has been charged that it is a philosophical term.
- (3) It has become so customary in this century to assert that the creed has been too heavily influenced by Greek substance philosophical terms that the biblical elements in the creed have been overlooked.
- (4) The creed affirms the incarnation and the humanity of Christ. However it said nothing about how the humanity and deity were related in Christ and therefore left a problem unsolved. It took the Definition of Chalcedon to attempt a statement of the relationship of the deity and humanity.
- (5) It is again in line with the Apostles' Creed in being a confession about salvation. The real issue at Nicea was: who can truly save us? The deity of Christ was affirmed out of concerns of salvation. It was a conference of bishops from churches rather than academicians. The incarnation was for us and our salvation. Too much literature in Christology focuses on Nicea as if it were a debate about Greek philosophical terms. There was debate about words, but the center of the debate was a great soteriological concern; namely, only God can truly save us.

## The Chalcedon Creed (A.D. 451)

The Chalcedon Creed or Chalcedonian Symbol became the official creed of the church with respect to the incarnation, which has been called two-nature Christology or Chalcedonian Christology. The bishops at Chalcedon did not intend to add something new to Christology but to clarify that which the church already believed. The bishops were pastors in the church seeking to say something for pastoral concerns. Further, their use of language was not meant to be technical in a philosophical sense but practical for pastoral concerns; namely the confessional material of baptismal candidates.

In a summary way the creed or Definition said the following: (1) Jesus Christ on his divine side is God undiminished; (2) Jesus Christ on his human side is man undiminished; (3) he was sinless in his life; (4) he was born of the virgin Mary; (5) there were two natures in the incarnation; (6) in the union of the two natures there is no confusion, no change, no division, and no separation-the famous four adverbs; (7) the union of the two natures in no manner compromises either nature; (8) there is the one person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This "two nature" Christology has been under severe attack since the middle of the nineteenth century. The major objections (1) it is not biblical; (2) it is a case of Greek substance philosophy intruding into Christian theology and confusing the Christian gospel; (3) it represents a nest of psychological problems created by two natures existing in the common territory of one body and one consciousness; and (4) it stated the problem but did not resolve it. In defense we respond:

- (1) The issues raised and debated at Chalcedon were not problems unique to the church in the fifth century; they are within the New Testament itself. It is not maintained that the New Testament reflects the language of Chalcedon but rather the kinds of issues Chalcedon spoke to are to be found already on the pages of the New Testament.
- (2) It is not accepted by all scholars that Greek substance philosophy and its terms corrupted patristic Christology. Macquarrie writes:  
Christian doctrines were not conformed to the mould of already existing terminologies, but terms already available were adopted into Christian discourse and given new meanings.
- (3) If a theologian believes that an incarnation is impossible or that it is dated mythology then any defensive statements of Chalcedon will make no impression. If one accepts the incarnation of God in Christ then he already has the scriptural affirmation that it is a mystery (I Tim. 3: 15-16).
- (4) The definition is a great affirmation of the incarnation. It stands as the limit of Christological speculation; not the complete clarification of the incarnation.

- (5) There is a sense in which the creed states the problem but does not solve it.
- (6) There was also the passion at Chalcedon to preserve the psychological unity of Jesus Christ.
- (7) The creed is not the end of reflection on christology.

### **The Athanasian Creed**

It is not known who composed the Athanasian Creed, but because it sounds so much like Athanasius' thought it has been attributed to him.

- (1) The creed has had a difficult time in the past two centuries because of its damnatory clauses. For example it reads in article 2: "Unless a man keeps it in its entirety inviolate [the Catholic faith], he will assuredly perish eternally."
- (2) The creed places Christology in the context of the doctrine of the trinity.
- (3) The Christology of the creed is important on two scores: (1) it states in a brief, clear, and lucid manner the sum of ecumenical Christology to the time of its composition; (2) it includes the career of Jesus. We are not saved by the person of the God-man per se, but by the God-man who suffers, who dies, who rises from the dead, who sits at the right hand of the Father, and who will come again.

### **3. The Deity of Christ**

The affirmation of the deity of Christ has been the central assertion of historic Christology. However, in the debates of the twentieth-century liberal theologians were willing to speak of the divinity of Jesus but not his deity. There was a small minor report at the time of the Reformation. The Socinians in Poland with the Racovin Catechism of 1605 challenged the orthodox tradition. There was also the earlier case of Micheal Servetus (1511-53). The deity of Christ began to be systematically denied at the time of the Enlightenment.

### **DIRECT AFFIRMATIONS OF THE DEITY OF CHRIST**

- (1) There are two basic stances about the New Testament and its Christology. There are the evolutionist who believe that the Christ of New Testament Christology evolved from an original, historical Jesus who is radically different from the later Jesus of Christological speculation. There are the

developmentalist who believe that from a primitive Christological core the high Christology of the New testament developed. This means that the later Christology is the result of the logical implications of the original core of Christology.

- (2) Appeal can be made to specific texts which according to our best knowledge of the Greek of the New Testament affirm the deity of Christ. Romans 9:5, Hebrews 1:8, John 1:1, John 1:18, John 20:28, Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:11, 2 Thessalonians 1:12, Colossians 2:2, John 17:3, 1 John 5: 20, James 1:1, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1:15, 2 Peter 1:1, Revelation 12:19, and Acts 20:28.

Indirect evidence of his deity may be also marshalled: (A) Authority (B) Lordship over the Sabbath (C) Acceptance of Worship (D) Summons to believe in Him (E) Miracle worker.

Although the pre-existence of Christ has been a standard concept in the history of Christology in recent years, it has been attacked or interpreted in an unexpected way. (1) It was a method common to that cultural epoch to indicate how important a person was. (2) The expression means that God always had Jesus in mind from all eternity for his role in the kingdom of God. (3) Finally it has been explained as a myth.

Hengel argues for the pre-existence of Christ on the grounds that it comes very early in Christian thought and is certainly not that of an inflated mythological concept. It is a concept even earlier than the virgin birth and must therefore be a Jewish rather than a Hellenistic concept. Hence pre-existence is part of the protology ("first things") or the theology of beginnings.

Bultmann actually inflated the concept of myth. In Bultmann's employment of the term in his interpretation of the New Testament, virtually every doctrine of historic Christology is designated as a myth. One must suspect a methodology which results in such an overkill.

#### **4. The Incarnation of God in Christ**

At the time of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century the deity of Christ and the incarnation came under attack. During the nineteenth century the attack was enhanced



radically, and a whole series of so-called "lives of Christ" were produced. But a real turning point in the methodology of Christological research was initiated by W. Bousset. In his famous book Kyrios Christos (1913) he attempted to explain the person of Christ by a detailed study of contemporary literature in order to show how Christology emerged out of the sociological mix of the first Christian century. In other words Christology is not a matter of careful interpretation of New Testament passages but rather a ransacking of the religious and philosophical concepts of the times in order to root out the meaning of New Testament words or concepts as they were understood in the first century. Hence he founded the "History of Religions" school of research.

- (1) R. Bultmann endeavored to interpret much of the content of the New Testament by a general appeal to the current terminology that was prevalent in the culture in which the New Testament was written, and more particularly to define much of it as myth. According to C.S. Lewis, his assessment is that Bultmann does not really know what a myth is. According to Lewis a myth can break out into history.
- (2) The church traditionally has seen 2 Corinthians 8:9 as a metaphorical way of speaking of the incarnation. In recent interpretation of the verse the meaning is shifted away from the incarnation to a statement of a more ethical nature. But the traditional interpretation of this verse was based on a true instinct about the incarnational meaning of the text.
- (3) Biblical interpretation, as with all other interpretation, does not compel a person to accept a given interpretation. The options are open. Recent commentators have attempted to circumvent the strong incarnational implications of key texts so that they read otherwise. We would raise an ad hominem observation and ask what there is about current New Testament scholarship that wishes to reverse the historic interpretation of these verses.
- (4) Another series of texts do not specifically state an incarnation but make sense only if an incarnation is assumed. These verses speak of the Father sending the Son into the world or of the Son coming into the world.
- (5) ~~It is customary to believe that Old and New Testament experts are in the best position to know the meaning of Holy Scripture, and it seems odd if that assumption is challenged.~~

Such a mentality focuses its attention upon problems, difficulties, and imponderables. It desires a religion which has not mystery, no supernatural, and nothing transcendental. Therefore the incarnation is not a magnificent drama to be affirmed in joy but a doctrine too imponderable to believe. It is a modernized, secularized, positivistic mentality which has lost the capacity to wonder. It reflects the human effort to reduce a three dimensional universe into one or two dimensions.

Ramm moves on to discuss the possibility of incarnation (pp 52-55), note the new kind of Kenotic Christology and the ensuing debate (pp 55-57), and develop the themes of an incognito Christology (pp 58-59). Personal or impersonal humanity is also addressed (p 60).

Leontius of Byzantium (sixth century) reasoned that if Jesus were a man, he must also be a person. The oddity of two persons in one body is alleviated by saying that the human person was included in the person of the Logos (enhypostasia, meaning in-personed). The personal life of Jesus in his manhood lived "within" the personhood of the Logos.

The other solution was to affirm the fully humanity of Christ but affirm that the humanity had not yet come to personhood, hence, anhypostasia (or impersonal). Theologians are saying that both affirmations are true, for each makes a valid point.

Enhypostasis seeks to emphasize the undiminished humanity of Christ. Anhypostasis emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ in the incarnation, for there would have been no Jesus of Nazareth if there had not been an incarnation.

I would simply add that all that man is being in the image of God would have been in the Logos became flesh.

## 5. The Virgin Birth

Various options are noted:

- (1) Authentic material was preserved by relatives & friends.
- (2) The material is myth reflecting the manner in which important people were exalted at that time.
- (3) Brunner interprets the Virgin Birth as an attempt to give a biological explanation of the incarnation. He accepts the incarnation but rejects the virgin birth.
- (4) R. Brown affirms the Virgin Birth, but believes that birth narratives of Matthew 1 and Luke 1 are later church reflections and therefore non-historical.
- (5) The Virgin Birth is a myth in common with the first Christian Century.

The most common theological justification for the virgin birth is that it provides for Christ's sinlessness. Barth connects it with the incarnation understanding Isaiah 7:14 quite literally. It is a word about divine grace and human helplessness.

In summary historic Christology affirms the virgin birth for the following reasons: (1) In that inspiration, revelation, redemption, and incarnation are of one piece it follows that in the providence of God record was provided for the birth narratives; (2) that the inspection of the documents shows the probability of the existence of a historical core to these birth narratives so that they cannot be viewed as totally the product of early church scribes; (3) that the church from the earliest of times believed the virgin birth part of the doctrine of the incarnation and therefore part of vital church confession; and (4) that the virgin birth is not a part of Christian gospel or kerygma but part of a healthy dogma. (p 73).

## **6. The Humanity of Christ**

His humanity enables us to comprehend our own humanity (Barth). A Christian anthropology can be constructed only from Christology. Yet in discussing the incarnation, we are without analogies.

Christ's life was a sinless life. But, was it possible for him to sin?

- (1) It has been affirmed that metaphysically he could not sin
- (2) It has been affirmed that it was a moral impossibility for him to sin.
- (3) It has been affirmed that it was morally necessary for Jesus to have the possibility of sinning. Ramm opts for genuine temptations but a position that Christ could not have sinned.

## **7. From the Cross to the Return of Christ**

Jesus knew death as part of human alienation from God. Therefore, it was a fearful prospect no matter the manner of death. Emphasis in the New Testament falls not in the quantity of suffering but the quality of the one suffering.

Concerning the resurrection Ramm notes:

In the resurrection Jesus Christ makes a transition from a state of humiliation to a state of glory. He becomes God's Lord and Christ.

The New Testament witnesses that, after the third day of the crucifixion, Jesus Christ rose from the dead in a body. Yet, it was not the same body of humiliation but an "eschatological" body-a body for eternity.

The difference among New Testament scholars about the resurrection are many and they are severe. There is some consensus on the following points:

- (1) There is a fullness of references to the resurrection in the New Testament, making it one of its most important themes.
- (2) There is no easy harmony of the accounts of the resurrection.
- (3) There are reasons to believe that I Corinthians 15:3-7 is the most primitive account of the resurrection in the New Testament.
- (4) The methods used to discredit the resurrection accounts employed in the nineteenth century are considered dated and replaced by more sophisticated methods of gospel criticism.
- (5) The cross is more than a revelation of the fullness of obedience of Christ. Its meaning is not exhausted in its triumph over death. As part of the gospel it is also a great theological event.

#### VIEWS OF THE RESURRECTION

- (1) Those who hold to historic Christology believe that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead on the third day. Those who believe in historic Christology are also very wary of attempts to spiritualize the resurrection and thus rob it of its status as the victory over death.
- (2) Other New Testament scholars believe that God did truly exalt Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior after his death. But this was an exaltation of his person which did not involve Jesus' body. God gave realistic visions of Jesus to the disciples.
- (3) Bultmann has a very individualistic view of the resurrection. A vicarious death for the sins of the world is a mythological concept and so is the resurrection from the dead. ~~The cross means the end of our old unauthentic way of existence. Jesus was buried and there his body corrupted.~~
- (4) Other New Testament scholars influenced by Bultmann approach the resurrection differently, although all agree (Kasemann, Marxsen) that the resurrection accounts are historically botched witnesses. It is claimed that the accounts themselves, properly sifted, revealed how the resurrection narratives came into existence. First there is the reported seeing (Sehen-an inward psychological interpretation and not the objective seeing as in the perception of an object)

of Jesus among the disciples. From the Sehen of Jesus is deduced the conviction that Jesus lives. From the belief that he lives it is further concluded that he lives bodily. From his bodily existence the resurrection narratives are constructed in order to account for a bodily resurrection.

However from this interpretation a negative conclusion is not necessarily drawn. The resurrection has existential force. Kasemann calls it the faith of the post-Easter community.

For those scholars who deny the bodily resurrection but still believe that there is a message which stems from Jesus, the pattern of interpretation has hardly changed in more than a hundred years. First it is conceded on scientific, historical and critical grounds that the bodily resurrection of Jesus cannot be accepted as historical fact. Then something is located in Jesus' teaching and ministry that has enduring worth or divine significance and that constitutes the message of the Christian church. Usually it is some version of the kingdom of God.

- (5) W. Pannenberg stands out uniquely in his belief in the resurrection of Christ. He is not in the conservative or evangelical camp, but he does believe in the bodily resurrection.
- (6) A distinction between the Easter Event and the Easter Faith cuts across many different versions of the resurrection accounts. The Easter Event is the bodily resurrection of Jesus which gave rise to the Easter Faith. This has been the stance of historic Christology.

### A PRIMITIVE WITNESS

I Corinthians 15: 3-7 is considered the most primitive witness to the resurrection in the New Testament.

- (1) Paul uses traditional language in this passage.
- (2) The omission of appearances to the women is odd. Thus this list may be an official list or a "court trial list".
- (3) The use of the word "appear" is a remarkable one. In the Septuagint it means a revelation of God in which God takes the initiative.
- (4) The startling text also implies that the early church accepted the appearance of Christ to Paul as a valid resurrection appearance and not a vision.
- (5) The chapter puts the empty tomb in perspective. A tomb may be empty for many reasons. Jesus could rise from the dead for only one reason-the power of God (Rom. 6:4).

## THE BODILY RESURRECTION

Those who believe in the resurrection of Christ differ in their understanding of its historical nature.

- (1) Basically the evangelicals argue that the bodily resurrection is a solid historical event. The resurrection took place in space, time, and historical sequence like any other event of history. It can be reported again with the same objectivity as any other event in history.
- (2) The other group focuses on the uniqueness of the resurrection. It is an event in which this world order is intersected by the eternal world order. The eschatological has dipped into the ordinary course of history. Therefore the resurrection must stand some measure apart from the ordinary writing of history. Barth has been the most sustained defender of this view.

## THE RESURRECTION AND CHRISTOLOGY

Historic Christology does not see the resurrection as only a matter of defending against its factual denial. To the contrary the main emphasis is on the role the resurrection plays in Christology:

- (1) The resurrection is part of the gospel and therefore part of what must be believed in order to be saved (cf. Rom. 10: 9-10, I Cor. 15:3-7).
- (2) Paul writes that the greatest enemy of humankind is death. The rule of Christ shall end the rule of death. The victory of Christ overcomes the sting of death. The hope of the believer is in the risen Lord. If the bodily resurrection of Jesus is denied then there is no victory over death. The last and final enemy of the human race is victorious, not defeated.
- (3) That Christ is not only the divine sufferer but also the triumphant victor has always been a theme in Christian theology. The risen Savior is also the Conqueror. There can be no Christus Victor if Jesus was not raised from the dead.

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- (4) The resurrection is also part of the exaltation of Christ

## THE ASCENSION

The ascension of Christ has been a central part of historic Christology. The direct affirmation of the ascension and the texts which imply the ascension are very many. Yet, curiously the accounts of the ascension of Christ defy a set chronology. In I Corinthians 15:

3-7 Jesus seems to come from heaven for each appearance although the passage does not mention the ascension. John 20: 17 suggests that the day of resurrection was also the day of ascension. Luke places the ascension after forty days of appearances, and the church calendar has followed Luke's version of the ascension.

Jesus ascended into a cloud; he is not pictured as ascending endlessly upward. In Scripture clouds are one of the symbols of the apocalyptic and the eschatological. The cloud then means that Jesus made a transition from this world of space, time, and materiality into the sphere of heaven. Barth is perhaps right in affirming that the resurrection of Christ, the session of Christ, and the return of Christ are one doctrine.

## THE SESSION OF CHRIST

After Jesus' ascension into heaven, the New Testament affirms that he was seated at the right hand of the Father. This is called the session of Christ.

### The Intercession

The first and most obvious deduction about the session of Christ is that he enters into his intercessory ministry.

### Cosmic Christology

In his session at the right hand of the Father, Christ begins his reign. Christ reigns until all enemies are defeated. This interpretation and the final victory of Christ he called cosmic Christology. Christ is Lord of Israel, the Lord of the church, the Lord over all demonic forces, and the Lord of the cosmos itself.

### The Session and Eschatology

There are certain affirmations which all who believe in historic Christology have in common:

- (1) According to Philippians 2:9-11 Christ shall one day receive universal adoration as Lord.
- (2) Christ shall reign until all the enemies of God are conquered, including death (I Cor. 15:20-28, Rom. 8:9-11).
- (3) The reign of Christ is universal and cosmic in that the cosmic order is recreated (Rev. 19-20). Although Christians may differ over the details of eschatology,

they all unite in affirming that the human story is not over until there is a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem.

### The Intercessor

The book of Hebrews is the richest with materials about the intercession of Christ. His intercessory work is set within the imagery of the tabernacle, priesthood, and offerings of the book of Exodus: (1) The Son of God became incarnate in the flesh so that he could experientially know what it was like to be a pilgrim in this world (Heb. 2:14-16). (2) He is first of all a Savior in that he offered up himself for the salvation of his people (Hebrew 9:11-28). (3) The place of intercession is heaven itself, the true tabernacle (Heb. 6:19-20, 8:1-2). (4) The basis of his intercession is his experience of temptation and suffering (Heb. 2:19, 4:14-16, 5:7-10). (5) He has a powerful priesthood for he ever lives to make intercession (Heb. 9:11-28).

### THE RETURN OF CHRIST

In historic Christology future things are believed for two reasons: (1) it is a matter of divine revelation; (2) the end of history so revealed is the logical development of what the Christian faith has said of events in the past and of the current experience of believers and the church.

The return of Christ is part of the total range of redemption and salvation.

The following elements are of significance with regard to the return of Christ and Christology:

- (1) It is the breaking out of the reign of Christ into the open, which began at his session and is therefore part of the vindication of Christ.
- (2) As affirmed in the creed of Nicea the second coming or return of Christ (parousia) establishes the kingdom of God, finally, openly, and for all eternity. The doctrine is therefore part of the doctrine of the kingdom of God and the church.
- (3) The salvation began in the believer by faith in Christ (justification) and continued in this life (sanctification) reaches its perfection (glorification) at the return of Christ.
- (4) The return of Christ is also the time of eternal salvation and eternal judgment.
- (5) It is the day of the universal recognition of the Lordship of Christ as announced in Philippians 2:9-11. It has been properly said that the kingdom of God has come, is coming, and will come. There is some truth in the claim that Christ was prophet in his earthly ministry as the teacher or the rabbi; that in his atoning death and its benefit Christ is a priest, and in the future reign and victory of Christ, Christ is king.



## 8. Title Christology

Although the research in title Christology is diverse, scholars tend to fall into one of two camps: (1) The roots of title Christology are to be found in Jesus himself. Or (2) the titles were thus projected backwards into the mouth of Jesus or his disciples.

### EXAMPLES OF CHRISTOLOGY

A common assumption in current New Testament studies is that the Christian church spread out into three different cultural-geographic circles. The three circles are: (1) Palestinian Judaism; (2) hellenistic Judaism; and (3) hellenistic Gentiles. However this is

not accepted by all New Testament scholars, for the opponents of this three circle theory believe that no such neat Christological circles existed.

(1) Logos: Possible Hellenistic and Semitic origins. Cullmann argues that John 1:1-3 is a deliberate echo of Genesis 1:1, and therefore Logos must have a Semitic origin. Logos has the sense of a word endowed with reason. The name Logos was used as a bridge from the Christian faith to the Greco-Roman world.

(2) Son of Man: "Son of Man" is the most complex title in current New Testament studies. The data of the title in the New Testament: (1) it occurs eighty times; (2) the expression occurs in all the fundamental source documents of the Gospels, so it is not the preference of one writer; (3) it is a title Jesus may have applied to himself; (4) the title appears in no creed; (5) John's gospel has a special Son of Man theology; and (6) the title defies any systematic representation.

Marshall remarks that there is no interpretation of the title Son of Man without problems. (1) The title has its origin in Daniel 7:4 and other materials growing out of the Old Testament, such as 4 Ezra 13 and 1 Enoch 37-71. (2) The Gospels shed new light on the content of the title by speaking of the suffering, dying, and rising of the dead and of

the Son of Man as the foundation of the kingdom of God. They also speak of the Son of Man coming in glory. (3) It has the most support among the titles as the title Jesus might have used for himself. (4) It is an expression which raises Jesus above the rank of rabbi or prophet. And (5) it is apparently a transition title, as it is not found in the Epistles and the church creeds.

- (3) Messiah, Christ: The title Christos occurs 529 times in the New Testament, with 379 of them in Paul's writings. The title raises a number of issues: (1) What was the current rabbinic understanding of a Messiah? (2) Did Jesus apply the title to himself or one of his disciples, or is it a title the early church gave him? (3) Why did the title change from that of a name for a coming person to that of a proper name? (4) Is there any claim by Jesus to the title from the accusation he bore with his cross? And (5) what effect did the resurrection have on this title?

From the discussions of this title we can summarize.

- (1) The root of the title is the Old Testament and more specifically the messianic materials. Hence there is both continuity and discontinuity in the picture of Jesus as the Messiah with Old Testament materials about the Messiah.
- (2) We believe that the term of Messiah would not have been given to Jesus unless there was a basis for it in Jesus' own lifetime.
- (3) There is a good measure of truth in Pannenberg's assertion that the resurrection of Christ both clarifies and certifies the titles of Jesus. The resurrection of Christ seems to have firmed up the title of Christ.
- (4) The meaning of the word Christ as an office or an expected individual becomes a proper name for Jesus in the New Testament.

- (4) Lord: (1) The Greek word for lord, kurios, has a great number of meanings similar to the English word lord.
- (2) In I Cor. 16:22 the Aramaic word for lord is used (mari) in connection with Christ. This means that Jesus was called Lord very early in the history of the church.
  - (3) In common with other titles there could have been a pre-resurrection meaning of the term and a post-resurrection one.

- (4) From confession and worship as Lord the name then borders on a confession of deity, or actually becomes such a confession. Jesus Christ was called Lord in solemn confession, and Christian worship began to crystalize around the word Lord as applied to Jesus.

- (5) Son of God: Marshall has presented the options. (1) Jesus used the title himself and claimed that he was the Son of God sent into this world for human salvation. (2) It is a title imported from hellenistic thought and signifies the myth of the divine man. (3) Behind the title Son of God was a more primitive title, which in turn was changed to the Son of God; or else it was a term which expressed Jesus' special relationship to God. (4) In the process of the development of the early church's Christology, the title Son of God emerges as one of the titles that was thought fit for Jesus.

From the standpoint of historic Christology the following observations may be made about the title Son of God:

(1) The title is so honorific and important that it is debatable if any church scribe would have given this title to Jesus without any claim to the title stemming from Jesus.

(2) The title is a messianic title similar to Son of Man. It has its historical roots in the baptism of Jesus.

(3) Although previous writers interpreted the title to mean Jesus' special sense of sonship or filial piety, that interpretation is too mild. It is clear when the expression Son is used the title means a special Son of the Father.

(4) Just as the resurrection heightens the meaning of most titles it heightens this one. If Christ's special sonship was obscure before the resurrection, it is clarified by the resurrection.

(5) The title comes into its fullest meaning in John's gospel where in so many instances the expression the Son is used rather than the Son of God.

(6) According to Kasper, the confession of Jesus as the Son of God is the hallmark confession of the Christian church.

## CHRISTOLOGICAL HYMNS

Delling says that there are no complete hymns but fragments suggesting that they were part of a hymn. The data about Christological hymns are not firm.

The "official" list of hymns treated by Sanders is: Philippians 2:6-11, Colossians 1:15-20, Ephesians 2:14-16, I Tim 3:16, I Peter 3: 18-22, Hebrews 1:13, and the Prologue of John. Certain things stand out in reviewing these hymns: (1) In that hymns are confessional and liturgical they reveal the kind of Christological affirmations made by the early church. (2) Because the hymns are earlier than their citation in the New Testament they are then more primitive than the New Testament. (3) The hymns cannot be arranged in any order of theological progression. They represent "Christological explosions" in the early church. (4) The rich Christological content of the hymns suggest that very early in the history of the church, the church in praise, worship, and liturgy had a very high Christology.

## CHRISTOLOGICAL CONFESSIONS

Some confessions are the essence of brevity being directed toward a very specific goal such as "Jesus is Lord" or "Jesus is the Christ". Other confessions speak of the redemptive activity of Christ. Others are binarian.

- (1) From its very beginning the church was a confessional community.
- (2) The Trinitarian confessions of the later church are already both directly and indirectly in the New Testament.
- (3) These confessions reveal that to be a Christian meant (among other things) one must confess his faith. Confessions grow out of the baptism even though later on they become more church confession than baptismal confession.

## 9. Christology and Criticism

Historic Christology is based on the historical reliability of the Gospels. If the criticism of the Gospels shreds them into a pile of historically unauthentic materials, then the case for historic Christology is lost. There is no question that redaction criticism of the Gospels has produced a crisis in historic Christology.

## A THEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

We do challenge the notion that New Testament studies have become so technical that only New Testament specialists may have the only voice in Christology. It is our thesis

that the final assessment in Christology must be a theological one. The reasons for this follow.

- (1) We are all philosophers.
- (2) All historical writing involves a philosophy of history.
- (3) Specialization can have an inhibitory function on the decisions of the scholars.  
A given "fact" is always in a circle of closely related facts, which in turn are in circles of other facts. This means that Gospel criticism is also involved in a circle upon a circle of facts. The critic who isolates out one mode of investigation and grants it a status of independence is not clarifying the case but obscuring it.

This leads us to the following statement: "The mentality of the believer in historic Christology is a confessional mentality; the mentality of the gospel critic is a problem-centered mentality." It boils down to this: The Gospels are the witness of God to the redemption of the world through his incarnate Son or they are a collection of documents posing fascinating problems for historical and literary research. But it is not a case of criticism or no criticism. New Testament scholars who hold to historic Christology engage in critical studies. Nor is it a case of belief or unbelief.

## APOSTOLIC CONTROL IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Historic Christology is based on the assumption that there is a substantial historical connection between Jesus and his disciples, between the disciples and the early church, and between the early church and the New Testament.

To the contrary, the modern critical assessment of the New Testament denies this. Modern critical New Testament scholars attempt to open up an enormous gap between the historical Jesus and the New Testament documents. E. Kasemann writes: "We can no longer assume the general reliability of the Synoptic Tradition about Jesus."

It has been said that if the radical scholars are right then the disciples were raptured to heaven on the day of Pentecost. The claim that Jesus' message and mission were non mythological, yet the framing of the same in the early churches is thoroughly mythological, is an undigested thesis.

Is Paul's Christology thinking totally mythological? In Paul's speeches and conversations in the book of Acts, Paul speaks of the saving death of Christ and the bodily resurrection as factual assertions that is, not as myths. When he speaks of the resurrection of Jesus he frames it as a historical event. There is a difference between a myth and a mistaken

notion or factual understanding. Paul may have been wrong about factuality of the resurrection; he was not wrong in understanding it as a claim to be a factual event in history.

Another problem about the mythological transformation of the mission and message of Jesus is the matter of possible written accounts and the sheer powers of memory possessed by people at the time. Written documents and excellent memories would be a check on the mythological elaboration of the mission and message of Jesus.

With a well-remembered tradition, and with a copy of a notebook possibly from, for example Matthew, it would be difficult for the critical theory to maintain itself. To put it in theological terms, there was an apostolic control over writing the Gospels, even though it may be difficult to chart.

The radical thesis is breathtaking. When the radical critics list the numbering of things that we really think we know about Jesus, it is a very small list. The thesis asserts great elaboration of the tradition in the first sixty years.

However, even the sixty-year can be shortened. If Paul started writing about authentic Christology in the church about the year AD 50, the period is cut to twenty years. If I Cor. 15:1-7 is taken very literally-we have the Christology of the church but a few years after the death of Jesus. It must be further noted that things moved much slower in that day in terms of transportation, communication lines, means of publishing, and distribution of materials.

Every year the period of elaboration is reduced makes the critical theory that much more fragile. It is our conviction that the time period is too short for such a great elaboration to have taken place.

Martin Hengel argues for an unbroken sequence of the teachings, ministry, and claims of Jesus to the writings of Paul.

## INFLUENCE OF HELLENISM ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

~~It is not contested that there were hellenistic influences in Palestine. The question is how pervasive it was.~~

Frances Young argues that an incarnational belief was in the air around New Testament times. Many of the concepts used by Jesus were common in that period. She modestly claims that she has not demonstrated that the belief in the incarnation rose out of such a set of concepts but that it would not be surprising if it did.

There is no need in historic Christology to presume that the writers of the New Testament miraculously in every way escaped their culture. But the point is that if other

writers of that period can transcend culture, why not the writers of the New Testament?

Barth thinks that Bultmann has a definite theological-philosophical grid and Bultmann will believe only what filters through the grid. Bultmann, having accepted this critical grid, can never hear what the New Testament is saying. In other word, Barth reads the New Testament as a document with its own integrity and the right to speak for itself. Bultmann reads it as a document that is profoundly determined by an ancient world view, and it can only be heard through a thorough critical investigation.

## THE EARLY CHURCH AND CHRISTOLOGY

The early church did not compose its own Christology; it received it. Unfortunately, some believe that Christology rests on a mistake. The early church said things of Jesus that should not be said by any man. According to Wiles, Knox, Bultmann, and others the early church wrote its own Christology. Their mistakes were innocent and sprang from good intentions, but they are still mistakes.

The bodily resurrection of Jesus was not invented, fabricated, or devised; it, rather, developed naturally out of the time and needs of the early churches. These claims were made by the early church and reflected backwards to Jesus. These Christological developments came innocently and were not instances of deception or fraud.

This may be an improvement over some of the opinions in the nineteenth century, and we should grant that recent criticism preserves the innocence of Jesus and the early church scribes. Nonetheless the conclusion is the same: the church wrote its own Christology.

It follows that the church created its own image of the Savior. There was not only elaboration in the early church about the titles of Jesus but also the work of Christ. The images of salvation in the New Testament must also be ascribed to church creation. The early church rewrites its Christology and its soteriology.

Evangelical New Testament scholars know that the composing of the Gospels was perhaps a complex matter. But it is the belief of those who hold to historic Christology that the Christology of the New Testament has its origin in Jesus Christ himself and the early church did not write its own Christology. The Christology of the New Testament develops consistently out of the Christology of Jesus Christ himself, and is not an evolutionary process resulting in a Christology in the Gospels far different from whom the historical Jesus was and claimed.

## DEGREES OF PROBABILITY

All literary theories are probability statements: and as one theory is based on another the probability of such a theory decreases. This means that New Testament studies work with probabilities. It does not mean that scholarship should be less vigorous but only more humble.

All work in biblical criticism from the most radical to the most conservative is subject to these limitations. It would be healthier all the way around if the limitations of critical work were recognized. Walter Wink charges New Testament scholars with having a "Guild Mentality."

## HISTORICAL INTEGRITY OF THE GOSPELS

Historic Christology is built upon the belief that the Gospels are historically substantial.

- (1) Historical information about Jesus outside the New Testament is scant.
- (2) The chronology of the life of Christ among the Gospels is so different that no sketch of his life can be made in the serial order of events.
- (3) However a lack of sequence in the Gospels does not mean that there is no historical substance to the individual events. The fact of so many variations among the Gospels is not new. It is true that the composers of the Gospels were Christians and wrote from a Christian perspective. But all historical writing is partisan. In that history can be written only as there is a selection of events, the partisan element enters. The real issue is whether the partisan commitment thoroughly distorts the writing of history.

In history of historic Christology the impression has been given that the four Gospels were based on solid historical materials in such a way that we have four versions of the life of Christ each with a ring of solid, hard, historical factuality.

~~As the church spread different traditions of Jesus, his teachings and his deeds followed along the different routes. The notion of a "school of Matthew" and a "school of Mark" and a "school of Luke" and a "school of John" is possibly a sound one. It specifies perhaps how the different traditions of Jesus radiating out from Jerusalem took on particularized forms.~~

The Gospels are primarily witnesses with authentic rootage in history. They are authentic impressionistic scenes. There is no exact chronology in the Gospels but great freedom of arrangement. The message is in the pictures, images and scenes of Jesus and



not in the chronicling. That is why there is so much variation in details of events, parables speeches, ect. among the Gospels.

Seen from this perspective the Synoptic problem allows that:

- (1) There is a richness in the witness of Christ as seen in the four Gospels.
- (2) There was great adaptability in the early church in its mode of witnessing as it spread out into the Roman Empire.
- (3) The Synoptic problem is also a commentary on the route of the traditions about Jesus as the church spread into the Roman Empire.
- (4) The important concern of the Gospels is their witness to Christ given in images, scenes, dramatic events, speeches, and encounters with a diversity of people.

The Gospels are gospel. They are witnessing, confessing, and theological documents. If they were not that there would be no gospel. Therefore the Gospels have a strange historical impress, for at the same time they are history and sermon; event and message... a foot in history and a foot out of history; the natural and the supernatural in the same paragraph.

## JESUS IS NECESSARY TO CHRISTOLOGY

Theologians with other types of Christology claim that their theology would not be endangered by an undermining of the Gospels. In our opinion all those theologies which would survive if it could be shown that Jesus never lived or that the details about him are trivial are versions of Hegelian Christology. The Hegelian theologians taught that there was a distinction to be made between the Christ idea and the Jesus of history.

Tillich thinks it is necessary that there appear in historical life one person who perfectly manifests New Being under the conditions of historical existence. Next he argues that if criticism shows that Jesus never lived all is not lost. There remains the hard datum of Jesus-as-New Being.

Bultmann says that if critical investigation eventually proves that we can know nothing of the historical Jesus, then nothing is changed. He reckons there is not too much historically valid about Jesus in the Gospels

It can be said that scholars like Know, Tillich, and Bultmann pale at the historical risk. Historic Christology is pledged to the historical risk. Historic Christology boldly takes the risk of history, for only in our space, in our time, and in our historical sequence of events can an event occur which is the redemption of the world

## JOHN'S GOSPEL

John's gospel is a paradox to any writer on Christology.

- (1) It has long discursive passages and conversations all with much theological content that is not matched in the Synoptic Gospels.
- (2) It reveals meticulous knowledge of Palestinian matters, such as peoples' names, peoples' relationships, customs, geographical sites, numbers of things, precise movements of peoples, etc.
- (3) It makes rich use of abstract nouns such as world, darkness, sin, truth, life, death, resurrection.
- (4) Its conceptual language, which came as a distinct surprise to scholars, is closer to that found in the Dead Sea Scrolls than the other Gospels.
- (5) It is very sharp in its attitude towards the Jews and is called by some an anti-semitic gospel.
- (6) Its concept of miracle as sign is different from the Synoptic Gospels as well as its many references to glory.
- (7) It records the dramatic raising of Lazarus
- (8) It reflects some kind of encounter with a philosophical mind (logos?) or hellenistic mentality far beyond anything found in the Synoptic Gospels.

Some of the theories about the nature of John's gospel follow.

- (1) It has been claimed that the many speeches found in John's gospel given by Jesus are either a series of asides spoken to John or materials that the other gospel writers failed to include in their gospels, which John in turn adds to his gospel to fill out the record.
- (2) It has been claimed that these are the words of the Risen Christ to John.
- (3) Raymond Brown believes in the core of the gospel as the work of John but postulates five rewrites of the gospel.
- (4) Barrett still remains with the thesis of the first edition of his commentary that a "school of John" gathered in Ephesus and it was such disciples who in consort wrote the works attributed to John.

- (5) Clement of Alexandria said that John wrote a spiritual gospel. He would say that he wrote a "theological gospel." He wrote to reframe the original Christian message to make it most effective to his audience in Ephesus.

John's gospel is a paradigm of creative missionary preaching and teaching. It took a theological genius to bind his faith to the historic Jesus of Palestine and at the same time to reframe that original message for the people of Ephesus.

### **10. The New Quest for the Historical Jesus**

From Reimarus to Wrede (1859-1906) a number of lives of Jesus were written. Albert Schweitzer's verdict was that these lives were a failure. The writers of such lives were reconstructing Jesus in their own image. Schweitzer believed that the eschatological element in the Gospels was not some Jewish excess to be ignored but the very key to the historical Jesus.

There were a number of assumptions in this historical quest such as: (1) the Gospels reflect a highly developed Christology; (2) as historical and factual documents the Gospels are suspect; (3) the miraculous events and many of the theological claims in the Gospels are contrary to what a modern person may accept; and (4) some sort of critical methodology is necessary to work through the Gospels and discover what is historically authentic.

However due to the thought of Bultmann a new crisis arose over the historical Jesus. Bultmann makes a severe division between (1) existential statements and (2) objective or scientific statements. Each territory is separate from the other, and each is autonomous. There is one point of overlap, and that is the event of crucifixion. It is a paradox because at the same time it is a genuine event of history and the event of world salvation. That which appeals to faith and decision belongs to the existential. The criticism of the Gospels is a scientific matter; the kerygma within the Gospels is an existential matter.

Kerygmatic and existential matters of the New Testament do not conflict with critical-scientific studies because they are compartmentalized. Theology so understood is concerned with the existential meaning of the New Testament. Because there is this severe division of the existential from the critical and scientific, nothing of the critical, scientific or historical authenticates faith, nor even helps to authenticate faith.

Faith is defined as an existential decision. It cannot be verified by that which is non-existential. Neither history nor more critical investigation can validate faith or give us more assurance of faith.

Bultmann does not believe that establishing historical facts about Jesus makes the kerygma any more believable. The scientific cannot shore up the existential. Bultmann

limits the interest of the kerygma as far as history is concerned to the event of the cross. He speaks of the Dass or thatness of the cross. In an effort to widen the base of the Christian faith one of Bultmann's most able students, Ernst Kasemann, delivered a lecture which in turn was printed. The essay opened up the new quest.

There are three things that the students of Bultmann wanted to do in correcting their mentor: (1) to think through their common assumptions; (2) to clarify their problems; and (3) to correct any onesidedness.

Kasemann was careful to asset that the new quest would not fall into errors of the old quest. Bultmann did not approve of the new quest by his former students. Existential matters and historical matters are separate, and it is impossible to shore up an existential kerygma with more data on the historical Jesus.

## THE NEW QUEST AND HISTORIC CHRISTOLOGY

Historic Christology recognizes no distinction between the Jesus who actually lived, the Jesus as reported in the Gospels, the Lord Jesus Christ of the letters of the New Testament, and the Jesus Christ of the Christological creeds.

The New Testament witness to Christ is rich, but there are certain beliefs that underlie all the diversity in the New Testament.

The believer in historic Christology has a vested interest in the new quest for the following reasons.

- (1) The interest in the outcome of this quest is of maximum interest to the believer in historic Christology because the issue is much more than academic. If God did not become incarnate then there is no salvation as the church historically understands salvation.
- (2) The believer in historic Christology is committed to an extra dimension in his understanding of history. Historic Christology cannot be defined within the structure of a positivistic writing of history. A new quest carried on by positivistic assumptions will produce a Jesus far different from the Jesus of historic Christology.

Any theory about the historical Jesus is at the same time a revelation of the scholar's view of history. The positivists have as much intrusion of theological and philosophical materials into their description of the historical Jesus as they presume in those of the other camp.

- (3) Contrary to the positivistic mood that governs gospel criticism and the new quest, the believer in historic Christology cannot dispense with the category of the supernatural. To profess to be Christian and also be naturalistic is to assert a contradiction.
- (4) Historic Christology presupposes the biblical doctrine of sin. One cannot discuss Christology apart from the necessity of propitiation.
- (5) Historic Christology always vigorously defended the complete humanity of Christ, yet that needs reaffirming in light of the historical quest.

### THE METHODS OF THE NEW QUEST

The new quest grows out of the old quest. Certain assumptions are those of the former quest. Advance is principally in newer methods of gospel criticism.

- (1) History of Religion: The method carries with it the presupposition of the strong influence of Hellenism on the scribes who wrote the New Testament and the further presupposition that the New Testament is much more the revelation of the life of the early Christian communities than a historical account of the life of Jesus. It changes biblical interpretation from the theological exposition of the text to a sociological commentary on the origin of concepts.
- (2) Form Criticism (Formgeschichte): Form criticism is based on the premise that a culture preserves its heritage by putting the various items of it in certain literary forms or genre. Examples of these forms are as follows: Paradigm-A brief, epigrammatic saying of Jesus followed by the reaction of the onlookers; Tales-Stories of the miracles of Jesus; Legends-Stories of Jesus birth and infancy; Myths-The transfiguration; Exhortations-The teaching materials in the Gospels.

This means that the Gospels are in no sense a biography of Jesus but documents stitched together. Form criticism reduces the Gospels to necklaces. Each form is artificially linked to the next form.

The task of the New Testament researcher is to identify the forms and attempt to reconstruct the situation in the early churches which would create the demand for such a form.

Limitations of form criticism are as follows: (1) There is no common agreement among scholars about the list of forms; (2) the assumption that there was a period of oral tradition before anything was written is gratuitous; (3) it cannot be established that there were such church scribes who were

doing this kind of elaboration; and (4) efforts to find parallels in non-biblical materials may be more harmful than helpful.

(3) Source Criticism: The attempt to discover what written sources were used in the writing of the Gospels. Markan priority plus a Q-source is the most popular theory.

(4) Tradition Criticism: It is presumed there was a period of oral tradition. Tradition criticism is a study of the phenomenon of oral tradition and as it could apply to our understanding of the formation of the Gospels. The most controversial feature of tradition criticism is the criteria of authenticity. There is no accepted list of such criteria. Scholars vary somewhat but the agreements are much more than the differences. Five criteria of authenticity:

(1) If a saying is dissimilar from Jewish or Hellenistic traditions it could be authentic.

(2) If a saying seems to be primitive, that is, something before the formation of the post-Easter church, it could be authentic.

(3) If a saying agrees with material already judged authentic it can be assumed to be authentic.

(4) If there is convergence of materials in the three Gospels it could be authentic.

(5) If the saying seems to be Aramaic or Palestinian it could be authentic. In reviewing the literature on the criteria of authenticity certain presuppositions are obvious; (1) The basic premise is that the Gospels are untrustworthy as historical documents until proven otherwise. The Gospels are assumed guilty of historical untrustworthiness until proven historical. This skeptical approach must not be overlooked nor underrated. (2) The other presupposition is that the materials which historic Christology so values are all mythological. (3) It is difficult to counter the assertion that something can be granted to be authentically from Jesus, if it can be shown to be irrelevant or trivial. (I'm not sure what Ramm means by point three).

(5) Redaction Criticism (Redaktionsgeschichte): This means to edit something for publication. Redaction criticism is the most specialized and most controversial method for study of the Gospels which has developed after World War II. It is closely associated with Composition Criticism. "Redaction is the conscious reworking of older materials in such a way as to meet new needs. It is editing that creatively transforms." It involves close attention to the theological convictions of the editor.

Redaction criticism presumes four stages from Jesus to the finished canonical Gospels: (1) the original sayings and deeds of Jesus; (2) the elaborations in the period of oral tradition; (3) the emergence of the documents assumed in source criticism; (5) the final editing or redacting of these materials into the canonical Gospels.

- (6) Content Criticism: The critical investigation characteristic of biblical introduction must also apply to what a text teaches. The issues in content criticism broke out fiercely between Bultmann and Barth. Bultmann saves the worth of an ancient text by restating its meaning in modern existential concepts. This means that unless we use content criticism we will believe things in the New Testament no modern person should. According to Barth this procedure determines ahead of time (a priori) what the text may say. Barth's position boils down to accepting the kind of picture of Jesus we have in the Gospels or agnosticism about the historical Jesus.

## THE NEW QUEST AND MARTIN KAHLER

- (1) Kahler wrote, the most important thing about the Gospels is the powerful picture they paint of Jesus; and that faith was independent of the results of historical research. Tillich latches on to both of these ideas.
- (2) Bultmann finds other things to his liking in Kahler. First he likes Kahler's emphasis on preaching and the Christ in the center of preaching. Bultmann's theology centers on the Christian kerygma. Bultmann does not believe in a historical atonement or a bodily resurrection from the dead but in their existential counterparts in preaching (the cross being the end of unauthentic, worldly, fleshly, etc., existence, and the resurrection being new, authentic life, the life of obedience, the life of openness to the future). Preaching in Bultmann's theology almost reaches the point of becoming charismatic and sacramental. Further, Bultmann likes the distinction Kahler makes between scientific history (Historie) and theologically interpreted history (Geschichte).
- (3) Some evangelicals have been appreciative of Kahler. First, he frees the gospel from the lordship of critical scholars. Second, Kahler refuses to divide Jesus up into the historical Jesus, the preached Jesus, and the Jesus of the history of Christology.
- (4) W.G. Kummel sounds a necessary note of warning. Kahler makes the message of Jesus free from the threat of any historical judgment. There cannot be serious faith in the importance of Jesus Christ if he does not have some contact with history, and if there is contact with history the judgements of the historians cannot be excluded. Historic Christology has always insisted that

the incarnation pledges its believers to the risk of history. Otherwise the gospel becomes moral exhortation (as it really is in Harnack), or existential New Being (Tillich), or a lesson in existential authenticity (Bultmann).

- (5) The most sympathetic treatment of Kahler is by C.E. Braaten. His thesis is that Kahler shows the impossibility of any meaningful quest for the historical Jesus either by the old questers of the nineteenth century or the new questers of the latter part of the twentieth century. That is for the new questers of the latter part of the twentieth century. That is for two reasons: (1) the Gospels do not contain the kind of data from which any sort of biography can be written; and (2) the Gospels are absolutely unique because there is no historical in an incarnation. The two thesis interlock.

## SUMMARY

- (1) Historic Christology is based on the historical integrity of the Gospels. The Gospels are confessional materials but they must have rootage in history.
- (2) Historic Christology does not call for an end of critical studies. Critical studies cannot be stonewalled. Nor does historic Christology regard the divine inspiration of the Gospels as a source of refuge from critical theories.
- (3) Historic Christology does not rule out the notion that the church helped produce the Gospels. The church is both the recipient of the gospel and the evangelist of the gospel.
- (4) Historic Christology believes in the continuity of the historical person of Jesus and the New Testament documents. There is not enough time for the historical teachings of Jesus to be so transmuted into a theological Christ, as is the claim in much criticism.
- (5) Historic Christology believed that the disciples lived on in the church for many years, and therefore critics cannot develop theories which would be possible only if the apostles were absent from the church
- (6) Historic Christology affirms that Paul is an important person for Christological studies.
- (7) Historic Christology concedes that the Gospels are not biographies in the modern technical sense, but the Gospel materials do reflect authentic history.
- (8) Historic Christology believes the Gospel not only convey to us teachings of Jesus and words of Jesus but also reveal to us the kind of person he was.



- (9) Historic Christology believes that it is an odd thesis to affirm that the Gospels tell us more about early church history than they tell us about Jesus Christ and his public ministry.
- (10) Historic Christology does not believe it is based on a mistake; a mistake that claims the early church was over-impressed by Jesus and converted him into Lord and Savior, and in the creeds as God the Son. To the contrary the New Testament witness is the true reflection of who Jesus Christ was.
- (11) Historic Christology does not believe that the New Testament is highly tainted with myths. Myths can be saved from being the sort of thing impossible for a modern person to believe by two suggestions. (1) A myth gives genuine insight into the nature of reality. It is ontological, which is a means of expressing something that is true in human experience. (2) Myths can have historical roots. They need not be timeless truths.

### 11. Historic Christology in the Twentieth Century

#### RECENT CHRISTOLOGICAL THOUGHT

##### 1. Liberal Christianity

Schleiermacher is recognized as the father of liberal theology. Schleiermacher does not build upon an interpretation of biblical Christological passages but commences with a philosophical scheme. Man feels absolute dependance upon God then has a God-consciousness. The feeling of absolute dependence and God-consciousness are the same. Sin is the disturbance of this God-consciousness.

Christ is interpreted within this pattern. Christ had an undisturbed God-consciousness. He is a divine type. He has in his personality a power to arouse a similar God-consciousness in us through the event of preaching. He is boldly called our Redeemer by Schleiermacher. Christ's sinlessness is a comment on his ability to maintain his God-consciousness undisturbed. His sufferings and his death reveal that firmness of his God-consciousness, for he maintained it unchanged until death.

Schleiermacher excluded from his Christology everything in the New Testament and historic Christology which did not fit this pattern. Some of the items that were so excluded were: the deity of Christ, the pre-existence of Christ, the virgin birth, the atoning death, a bodily resurrection, the ascension, and the return of Christ. Also excluded were the Christologies of the Creed of Nicea and the Definition of Chalcedon.

Schleiermacher criticized both the New Testament and historic Christology. Miracles could not happen. In a sentence, Schleiermacher stands at the head of both modern or liberal Christology and the attack made upon historic Christology.

John Macquarrie thinks that Schleiermacher's opinions prevailed over historic Christology. He notes three items in which Schleiermacher's opinions were accepted: (1) that Christ as a truly human person replaces the Christ of a divine incarnation; (2) that Greek vocabulary be dropped from Christological discussions; (3) that our faith in Christ be based on experience and not on the historical credibility of the Gospels which, as a matter of fact, historical criticism was eroding away.

An odd question in Christology is, Was Jesus a Christian? For liberal theology, Jesus Christ was the first Christian. Historic Christology affirms that Jesus was not a Christian. He is the Savior, the Lord. He stands apart from sinners as their Redeemer. The first Christian is the first believer.

## 2. Existential Christology

Kierkegaard is regarded as the founder of existential Christology. Both Bultmann and Tillich are deeply indebted to Kierkegaard's existential thinking about Christ, with additions from Heidegger.

Heidegger had used the terms authentic and unauthentic. These terms can be roughly retranslated into faith and sin. Tillich retranslates them into New Being and Non Being. Salvation is to move from Non Being to New Being. Jesus as the Christ is Jesus as the one person who lived the authentic Christian life (or New Being) in the changes of history. But an existentialist Christology arouses various apprehensions in a follower of historic Christology. The first apprehension is the same that we have with process Christology, namely a philosophy intrudes itself too deeply in Christian theology.

There is no genuine interpretation of the Christological texts in Tillich. But jumping from New Testament texts to modern existential concepts is not an adequate interpretation of the New Testament.

Finally, there is no Savior. In Tillich's system the offense of the cross has vanished, justification by faith has been reduced to the modern psychological concept of self-acceptance.

The historical Jesus is dispensable; that which is forever is our discovery of our own self-understanding through the encounter with some Symbol of transcendence.

### 3. Process Christology

The process philosophy of Whitehead has created two waves of process theology in American theology. Out of the second wave has come D.R. Griffin. Griffin claims that Whitehead's philosophy, while denying all supernatural events, nevertheless admits of special events, even a supreme event. He attempts to show that Jesus is God's supreme event, as it were, or God's decisive revelation.

First, it is clear where Griffin will not stand. He rejects the bodily resurrection of Christ, any strong doctrine of divine revelation, any doctrine of divine inspiration, and anything supernatural. Second, Whitehead receives nothing short of adulation. Griffin runs the risk of making Whitehead look better than Jesus.

The principle logical flaw in his exposition is that from only natural resources Griffin attempts to make Jesus in some sense absolute. From relativities one cannot derive absolutes.

Finally, those who accept historic Christology must reject the distasteful pretension that in reality what the church has lived by through its many centuries has not been historic Christology but Jesus's vision of reality. But it is even more distasteful when the impression is that the only believers in historic Christology today are young, uneducated, misguided neo-fundamentalists and charismatics.

John Cobb's Christology in Christ in a Pluralistic Age, is a radical departure from historic Christology. There is no deity of Christ, incarnation, sinlessness, virgin birth, atoning death, bodily resurrection, nor return of Christ. Cobb freely states from time to time that historic Christology is an impossible position for him, even though at other times he tries to keep tradition.

Cobb's Christology is based on the concept that God is at work in each of us as a lure to coax us on to being better persons. Cobb does not use the expression "better persons," preferring a more philosophical concept of "creative transformation." This activity of God in human persons Cobb labels as the Logos or the Christ. However, this Logos or Christ activity going on in all persons came to a unique manifestation in Jesus.

The similarities here with Schleiermacher's notion of the continuing power of Jesus' personality to affect people should not be overlooked. The Logos as the principle of creative transformation came to a unique manifestation in Jesus.

In the assessment of such Christology the following may be briefly said:

1. There is the same problem in Cobb as with Griffin. Whitehead threatens to come out looking better than Jesus.

2. He attempts the usual rescue mission with its resulting Christology of the paradigm. He grants the radical conclusions of current New Testament critics and then attempts to salvage something for Christology from the authentic scraps which remain. Soon another Albert Schweitzer will write a summary of the New Quest for the Historical Jesus showing that the New Questers were guilty of the same errors as the Old Questers.
3. His solution to the Christological issue is essentially Hegelian. Namely Jesus is the incarnation of the Christ-idea.
4. In a number of instances Cobb states that he cannot believe something in historic Christology because it is based on substance philosophy and not process philosophy. But he never asks the questions: what do New Testament texts state? Historic Christology claims its roots are in the New Testament and not substance philosophy.
5. Cobb is to be commended for setting out his logical knots. His Christology is only as good as his solution of these logical problems.
6. He makes the kingdom central to Jesus' teaching and mission. That is always (or usually) the case when historic Christology is given up.
7. He has a severe problem by assenting to pluralism as a fact of our times and yet making Jesus unique.
8. Cobb also gets into severe problems of a logical nature when he speaks of how full the Logos was in Jesus. There is no conceivable basis that Cobb can know that "Jesus existed in full unity with God's present purposes for his life" or that "Jesus was fully open to the Logos."
9. Again as in Griffin there is the patronizing attitude that what the church really believed was not the impossibilities of historic Christology but some version of process Christology.
10. We come back again to Brunner's observation that those who give up historic Christology ought to give up its vocabulary. When the incarnation of God in Christ is denied all such terms lose their meaning. If Jesus is really dead in a Palestinian grave we ought to admit the implications flat out.

#### 4. Paradigm Christology

A paradigm means a model, a pattern, or an example. It involves an important methodological shift, which if not understood leaves the Christology blurred. The shift is

from (1) Jesus as the one exhibiting something unique or paradigmatic in his life to (2) Jesus as the theme of Christian preaching and object of Christian belief in virtue of this paradigmatic something. Jesus as the man of authentic faith becomes the Jesus as preached in the church and hence the object of our faith.

Jesus may be made paradigmatic in one of the following ways:

- (1) He exhibits that which God expects of humankind.
- (2) He exhibits faith in its truest meaning.
- (3) He aligned himself with the poor, the socially outcast, and the oppressed.
- (4) He exhibited a special filial piety.
- (5) He exhibited a special nearness to God.
- (6) He dared to speak with the authority of God.
- (7) He was uniquely the Man for other men.
- (8) He was God's agent for introducing the kingdom of God.
- (9) He is the model case of the life of God in the life of all people.
- (10) He was totally transparent to God or totally dedicated to the will of God.
- (11) He was a completely authentic existential person.
- (12) The will of Jesus was identical with the will of God.
- (13) It is the cause-of-Jesus that carries over from Jesus to us.
- (14) Jesus loved as no other person loved.
- (15) Jesus believed what he believed unto the death of the cross.
- (16) Jesus had an unprecedented intimacy with God.
- (17) Jesus was the most Spirit-filled of all people.
- (18) Jesus was God's representation and representative.
- (19) Jesus is the paradigm of openness to God and willingness to be transformed.

There is one logical flaw in all paradigmatic Christologies: in logical terms each one is built on a foundation of sand. Yet from this foundation of sand an absolute claim is made for Christ. Paradigm Christology raises certain serious issues which apply also to process Christology and the Christology of religious liberalism.

- (1) How can Jesus Christ in any sense be a person with universal saving significance if historic Christology is denied? Defenders of paradigm Christology have surely undermined any possible universal significance for Jesus Christ.
- (2) How can one avoid the dilemma that, by declaring one human being who is only man as having universal significance for the salvation of all people, one is in danger of lapsing into idolatry?
- (3) If Jesus is dead, he is dead with all his claims. To pretend that Jesus lives on in some sense, in any sense, Nicholson call the primitive hangover.

Kasemann pleads: "There are no grounds for lapsing into a defeatist skepticism; there are at least some things about which we can have maximum certainty and which free us from the necessity of judging the faith of the community to be arbitrary and meaningless." Yet how can Kasemann speak of Jesus as the Lord of the church, or Cobb describe him as the Logos, or Marxsen appeal to the Cause of Jesus (Sadhe Jesu) if Jesus is dead? Nicholson is right as far as he goes. If Jesus is dead we ought to be rid of notions of a "primitive hangover," an afterglow, or a continuing powerful personality and the like. Admittedly, historic Christology may be wrong, but its logic is right in its understanding of the continuing power of Jesus Christ in the church and in the world: Christus Victor!

## 5. Liberation Christology

We are limiting it here to Latin American Christianity. All their miseries could be summed up in one word: oppression. And if there is one word which sums up the Christian response, it would be liberation.

- (1) The development of Christology in the Patristic period, the Reformation period, and the post-Reformation period is seen as too philosophically oriented, too cerebral, too abstract, and too divorced from the sufferings of life.
- (2) Jesus Christ is seen primarily as the Liberator.
- (3) Jesus Christ is seen as a political rebel.
- (4) The picture of Jesus "meek and mild" can be painted only by neglecting the full picture of Jesus in the Gospels.
- (5) The cross and the resurrection are not to be seen in a narrowly individualist manner as the means by which we are each saved. Rather they are to be seen in the context of liberation from oppression.
- (6) It is a von unten Christology. Christology must commence with the historical life of Jesus since all other points of beginning are too abstract or too theologically shaped already. It is in the historical Jesus that one can see Jesus' concern for the poor, the socially outcast, and the politically powerless, that is, Jesus' own praxis.
- (7) The kingdom of God and Christology mutually interpret each other. The kingdom of God is interpreted as the gradual (or sudden!) transformation of this wicked world order into the order of God's justice and love.

We list a few of our doubts concerning a Christology of liberation.

- (1) It represents an excessive reaction to the regional situation.
- (2) The second concern is with the centrality of praxis. The concept of praxis means that only those in a situation know the dynamics of the situation and therefore are the only ones qualified to make decisions. But it has always been unhealthy to exempt any movement from the moral, factual, historical, and ethical scrutiny of its opinions. One other item that makes us restless with the concept of praxis is that it derives from Marx.
- (3) Chalcedon cannot be so readily discarded as being too abstract or too philosophical. As we have already pointed out more than once, the issues of Chalcedon are in the New Testament itself.

## 6. Post-Auschwitz Christianity

M.B. McGarry has summed up the reaction of Christian theologians to three recent developments: (1) Hitler's effort to exterminate the Jews and the issue of anti-semitism; (2) the emergence of the state of Israel; and (3) recent rabbinic studies which show how Jewish Jesus' background was. Among the key issues discussed are: (1) did historic Christology have anything to do with the persistence of anti-semitism, which was a large factor in Hitler's thought; and (2) how does the Christian concept of the finality of Jesus Christ relate to our understanding of the Old Testament and of the Jewish people? Some of the important matters emerging from McGarry's survey follow.

- (1) The relationship of the Christian church to the Jewish people, the synagogue, and the Old Testament is complex.
- (2) The church has commonly taken a supersessionist view, which means that the church replaces Israel as the people of God. Hence the New Testament itself has been called an antisemitic book.
- (3) Opposite the supersessionist theory are various dialogical theories. All supersessionist language is to be avoided.
- (4) The two-covenant theory is that God has really two people (Israel and the church), under two covenants, each to go its own way with mutual respect through history.
- (5) The Jewishness of Jesus is to be clearly set out in our Christology to show how seriously the church understands its roots in the Old Testament, in Judaism, and in the synagogue.

- (6) All church documents, hymnology, etc. are to be purged of antisemitic statements.
- (7) The most difficult problem of all for Christians is how to understand the finality of Jesus Christ. If a theologian denies supernaturalism one cannot accept the traditional Christian view of the relationship of the Testaments. However as articulate Christians we must face the scandal of affirming that the Old Testament comes to its central intention in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Only in Jesus Christ can we decode the intent of the promise character of the Old Testament.

## 7. Critically Reconstructed Christology

By a critically reconstructed Christology we mean a Christology that accepts in general the current methods of New Testament studies and some of its conclusions but seeks to maintain some continuity with historic Christology.

Schillebeeckx and Kung both are Enlightenment men. Both believe that a theologian must come to terms with modern critical studies of the New Testament as a condition of voicing opinions in Christology. Both men believe that they are trying to save the gospel for this age. Both are influenced by European and Third World versions of liberation theology. Finally, both believe that the von unten approach is the only option for modern theologians (even Roman Catholic ones). Both suffer from a serious ambiguity. Expositions come through in popular language as double-talk.

## 8. Christology and Mysticism

Among the most famous of the Christ-centered mystics is Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). However, a more articulate Christology of mysticism is found in James Stewart's, A Man in Christ. It is built upon the Pauline expression, in Christ. It is a union which can only be understood mystically.

## 9. Revelational Christology

One of the major Christological treatises of the times is Wolfhart Pannenberg's (1968) Jeus-God and Man. His system is a complex tapestry of elements from Old Testament scholars, New Testament scholars, and Hegel. All that Jesus claimed for himself and taught of the kingdom of God is ambiguous until the resurrection; then all is clarified. He discounts the critics of the New Testament for being skeptics rather than historians. He discounts the historicist veto by saying that all historical events were unique and therefore the uniqueness of the resurrection cannot count against it. He objects to Chalcedon for he says one cannot join two substances-an unbelievable literal interpretation of the Definition. Rather he seems to defend a progressive incarnation.



We experience difficulty with Pannenberg's inconsistent methodology. At times he cites the biblical text; at other times the key thought is from Hegel. He rejects the virgin birth and accepts the bodily resurrection.

Pannenberg should be classified with Christologies of the future, though he like Moltmann is also difficult to classify. The latter has been classified as a Word theologian, a futurologist, and a theologian of liberation. To interpret the cross and resurrection in the motifs of liberation is certainly strained exegesis.

## THE RATIONALE FOR HISTORIC CHRISTOLOGY

### Modern Defenders

Historic Christology has one overriding passion and that is to have a doctrine of salvation that really saves. It is only God who can save. Christ took total humanity in order to save the whole person. The person and work of Christ "co-inhere." Christologies which come short of historic Christology present a Christ who cannot truly save. He may be a spiritual catalyst, a model, a paradigm, or a divine man, but he is not a Savior.

A reductionist Christology is any Christology which comes measurably short of historic Christology. Reductionist Christology does not deal with such absolutes as saved or lost, heaven or hell, redeemed or unredeemed, natural humanity or spiritual humanity. It locates the offense of Christianity in its challenge to the "life style" of modern people. Reductionist Christology thus unburdens the church from defending the absurdities bound up with historic Christianity and enables the church to preach a more modern, more relevant, and more believable Jesus.

- (1) J.S. Lawton (1947) argues that modern reductionist Christologies are new in the church. These Christologies may be more right than the historic Christology but the point of Lawton is that they are not the faith of the prior Christian centuries.
- (2) The Christ of reductionist Christologies was buried and his body corrupted. The only Christ for the church and the believer is the remembered Christ.
- (3) Paul presents the greatest conquest of Christ the risen Lord and Victor to be that of death (I Cor. 15:26). A reductionist Christology may have a message which enables us to face death with courage, but it offers no conquest of death.
- (4) Reductionist Christologies state directly that the church really did not understand Jesus properly until the nineteenth century or more likely the twentieth.
- (5) The most serious defect of all reductionist Christologies is that they do not have a Savior who can save.

## The Christian Hope

The Christian hope is Jesus Christ as crucified, as risen, as reigning, and as coming again. But that hope has been eroded away in the minds of many theologians by modern science and modern philosophy.

That a person has an immortal soul has been attacked by Hume. To Bultmann hope is openness to the future, which means living a life of radical obedience to love. There is no hope centered in the return of Christ. To Tillich, eternal life is the present quality of Christian experience.

The basic motif of the theologians of hope is that our future is not determined. Those who believe in the hope of historic Christology do not demean the necessity of the quality of eternal life in our present existence. But these are not the Christian hope itself. Only in historic Christology is there the greatest hope for the human person.

It is only in historic Christology that the great hope of the church in the victory, return, and reign of Jesus Christ our Lord is maintained. All modern denials of that hope or alternate versions break with a tradition from the Apostles' Creed to the Barmen Declaration.

### CHRISTOLOGY IN THE CHURCH COUNCILS

(the resolution of trinitarian relationships  
and the hypostatic union of Christ)

#### ERROR AGAINST DEITY

Arius  
(Christ is a  
created being)

#### CHURCH POSITION

Nicea, 325  
(Christ is Eternal  
and truly God)

#### ERRORS AGAINST HUMANITY

Constantinople, 381  
(full manhood of Christ  
is affirmed)

Apollinarius  
(dominant logos  
over the humanity)

Nestorius  
(Christ is two  
natures in a  
mechanical union)

Ephesus, 431  
(unity of Christ's  
personality is  
affirmed)

Chalcedon, 451  
(orthodox Christology  
established: two natures  
in one person)

Eutyches  
(divine nature  
shallows up the  
human nature)

# FOUR GREAT CHRISTOLOGICAL PASSAGES - DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

JOHN 1:1-18; 8:58 CHRIST IS THE GOD OF INCARNATION	PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11 CHRIST IS THE GOD OF HUMILIATION	COLOSSIANS 1:13-20; 2:9-10 CHRIST IS THE GOD OF CREATION	HEBREWS 1:1-3; 5-14; 2:5-18 CHRIST IS THE GOD OF REVELATION
<u>THE WORD OF GOD</u> - LOGOS DOCTRINE -	<u>THE FORM OF GOD</u>	<u>THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD</u>	<u>THE REVELATION OF GOD</u>
<p><u>LOGOS</u> = WORD/JESUS HINGE TEXTS: 1:1; 1:14; 1:18</p> <p><u>HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE FATHER:</u> THE WORD 1:1, 14 RADIANT GLORY 1:14 ONLY BEGOTTEN ONE 1:14 SON 3:16</p> <p><u>HIS DIVINE WORK IN CREATION:</u> OF ALL THINGS 1:3 OF LIFE 1:4</p> <p><u>HIS DIVINE WORK IN SALVATION:</u> THOSE WHO RECEIVE HIM 12-13</p> <p><u>HIS DIVINE NATURE:</u> THEOS = (GOD) 1, 18 EXCLUSIVELY GOD - 18 IN THE FLESH - 14 IN ETERNITY PAST - 1</p>	<p><u>EARLY CHURCH HYMN:</u> CHRIST'S HUMILIATION - 6-8 CHRIST'S EXALTATION - 9-11</p> <p><u>HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE FATHER:</u> FORM OF GOD EQUAL WITH GOD BONDSERVANT</p> <p>SET ASIDE HIS DIVINE GLORY DID NOT SET ASIDE HIS DIVINE NATURE</p> <p><u>HIS DIVINE WORK IN SALVATION: (6-8)</u> EMPTIED HIMSELF BECAME A MAN OBEDIENT TO DEATH</p> <p><u>HIS DIVINE NATURE:</u> THEOS = (GOD) - 6 EXALTED - 9 LORD - 11</p>	<p><u>THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST EXISTS OVER:</u> CREATION - 15-17 CHURCH - 18; 2:10 CHRISTIANS - 13-14, 20</p> <p><u>HIS DIVINE WORK IN SALVATION: HE HAS - 13-14</u> DELIVERED US TRANSFERRED US REDEEMED US FORGIVEN US</p> <p><u>HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE FATHER:</u> FIRSTBORN - 1:15, 18 THE SON HE LOVES - V.13 CO-ETERNAL/FATHER-17</p> <p><u>HIS DIVINE WORK IN CREATION:</u> OF ALL THINGS - V.16 PRE-EXISTENT - V.17 PRE-EMINENT - V.18</p> <p><u>HIS DIVINE NATURE:</u> THEOTETOS = GODHEAD 2:9 "ESSENCE" OF GOD 1:19 COMPLETE DEITY</p>	<p><u>GREATER THAN PROPHETS SEVEN CHARACTER AFFIRMATIONS:</u> ✓ HEIR OF ALL THINGS - V.2 ✓ CREATOR - V.2 ✓ MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S BEING - V.3 ✓ PERFECT REPRESENTATION OF GOD - V.3 ✓ SUSTAINER OF ALL THINGS V.3 ✓ SAVIOR - V.3 ✓ EXALTED LORD - V.3</p> <p><u>GREATER THAN ANGELS SEVEN SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS:</u> ✓ PSALM 2:7 (V.5) ✓ 2 SAM. 7:14 (V.5) ✓ DEUT. 32:43 (V.6) ✓ PSALM 104:4 (V.7) ✓ PSALM 45:6,7 (VS. 8-9) ✓ PSM 102:25-27 (VS. 10-12) ✓ PSALM 110:1 (V.13)</p>

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# NAC news

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Newsletter about *The New American Commentary*

## Expounding the Great Christological Texts

Daniel L. Akin, Dean of Students/Associate Professor of Theology, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

In June 1993 Southern Baptists, by way of resolution at their annual convention, affirmed the "biblical teaching concerning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the sole and sufficient Savior for all persons who have lived or ever shall be." It was noted that such a statement was needed because "the Christian church is now confronted with various schemes of universalism, radical pluralism, theological inclusivism, and religious relativism, all of which call into question the clear teaching of Holy Scripture and historical Baptist belief in the particularity and finality of the revelation and salvific work of Jesus Christ."

What is it that drives Baptists and evangelical Christians to make such strong statements of theology and faith? I believe the answer can be found not only in "the clear teaching of the Holy Scripture" in general, but in the great Christological texts in the New Testament in particular. I make reference to the quintessential quartet of John 1:1-18; Phil 2:1-11; Col 1:13-23; and Heb 1:1-3.

The clear exegesis and exposition of these four passages are the bedrock foundation of an orthodox Christology. Both his person (full deity and perfect humanity) and work (sacrifice and atonement) are gloriously expounded in these texts, though it is his person that is more strongly emphasized.

What we think and believe about Jesus affects all aspects of our theology: what we think about God, the Bible, and salvation, for example. If we are to think correctly, that is biblically, about Jesus, these four great texts should be taught clearly, consistently, and courageously without compromise or apology.

What might four expository sermons on these great texts look like? What would be an accurate assessment of their theme and emphasis? I would like to propose the following for consideration of how to get at these passages in preparing to proclaim them to the people of God.

A sermon on John 1:1-18 might be titled "Jesus Christ: The God of Incarnation." Such a sermon would declare

that as the Word of God Jesus powerfully preexisted (1:1-5), was prophetically witnessed (1:6-9), was personally rejected (1:10-13), was permanently incarnated (1:14), is properly exalted (1:15-17), and that he perfectly communicated (1:18).

In this text emphasis is placed upon Jesus as coeternal, coequal, and consubstantial with the Father (1:1-3). He is the perfect embodiment of God revealing himself to humanity (1:14, 18), and by believing in Christ alone we can become children of God (1:12). Various structural analyses of the passage generally agree that the focus is on vv. 10-14, while vv. 1, 18 also receive emphasis. The central verse is considered to be either v. 12 or v. 14. It can be argued, in fact, that v. 12 contains the soteriological heart of the passage and v. 14 the Christological heart. These two verses along with the whole prologue set forth the theme of John's Gospel. The first and last verses of the passage also receive important emphasis.

The sermon on Phil 2:1-11 could bear the title "Jesus Christ: The God of Humiliation." This passage declares first that we must cultivate the disposition of our Lord (2:1-5) by seeking unity (2:1-2), humility (2:3), and sensitivity (2:4-5). Second, we must consider the humiliation of our Lord (2:6-8), who humbled himself in his renunciation (2:6), in his incarnation (2:7), and in his crucifixion (2:8). Third, we should celebrate the exaltation of our Lord (2:9-11), who was in an exalted position (2:9), designation (2:9-10), adoration (2:10), and confession (2:11).

The second and third divisions of this passage (2:6-11) many believe to be based on an early Christian hymn of two stanzas. The passage is ethical (especially vv. 1-5) and soteriological, with emphasis falling on the humbling and emptying of our Lord. This so-called "kenotic Christology" flows from this passage, which is one of the great moving texts in all of Scripture. Emphasis on Christ's full deity and utter uniqueness as the God-man is clearly communicated in the text.

The third sermon, on Col 1:13-23, could be titled "Jesus Christ: The God of

Creation." Here the message is that Jesus is Lord of the Cross or Savior (1:13-14), Lord of Communication or Revelator (1:15), Lord of Creation or Creator (1:15-17), Lord of the Church or Leader (1:18-20), and Lord of the Christian or Master (1:21-23).

Also viewed by many as an early Christian hymn, this text emphasizes that (1) Christ makes visible the invisible God, (2) Christ is the agent of creation, and (3) God's fullness dwells in him. Perhaps used as a polemic against first-century heresy, this text is quite relevant in confronting "New Age" ideas concerning the relation between God, Jesus Christ, and the world. Further, the preeminence of Christ "in" and "over" his church sounds a much-needed call in our day when personal agenda and self-serving attitudes unfortunately prevail in many of our fellowships.

Finally, a sermon on Heb 1:1-3 could be presented under the title "Jesus Christ: The God of Revelation." The message of this passage is that Jesus is God's best because of his proclamation (1:1-2a), his possessions (1:2b), his power (1:2c), his person (1:3a), his provisions (1:3b), his purification (1:3c), and his position (1:3d). Seven marvelous characteristics of our Lord weave this text together. Thirteen times the author will use the word "better" in this book to convey the superiority of Jesus to prophets, angels, Moses, and Aaron, i.e., to the entire Old Covenant economy. The emphasis of the prologue (which closely parallels Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3) is upon Christ's superior revelation to anything previous, as well as its climactic and definitive nature. Jesus is God's very best in every way. When we have Jesus, we have all from God that we need.

Though there is some degree of overlap in these texts, each is unique in its own right, and all four are essential in laying the foundation for a biblical orthodox Christology. We need to preach about Jesus. We need to expound his person and his work so that his people will know their Savior for who he is and what he has done. I commend these four great texts to preachers of the gospel across our land with the prayer that their exposition will exalt the wonderful Savior who loved each one of us so much that had anyone of us been the only person to ever live, he still would have left heaven and died on that cross of Calvary just for us. ■

## The Importance of the Study of Christology

When we read the N.T., we quickly become aware of the fact that the person and work of Christ (i.e. Christology) is central. It is central not merely to the "theology" of the New Testament writers; it is central to the day-to-day lives of the N.T. Christians.

When we say that Christology is of central importance, what we are affirming is that Christ is like no other person who has ever existed or could exist. The Scriptures declare Him to be fully God and yet fully man, not in a pantheistic sense, but in a theistic sense. Christianity makes claims about Christ which no other religion makes about its' leaders. We affirm that Christ is set apart by His very nature from all other men. Therefore, Christianity itself is distinct from all other religions. Any type of world ecumenism is ruled out by the unique person, work and claims "of" and "for" Jesus of Nazareth.

Christology has been the source of controversies since the early Church. The Church however, very early determined its position of this doctrine. Contemporary denials of Christ's deity or manhood or some other aspect of His person and work are really no different from the heresies which the early Church councils overthrew. Few would deny the importance of Jesus Christ, but many would dethrone Him. They would give Him prominence but not preeminence.

### The Importance of Colossians 1-2

Many commentators have rightly proclaimed that this passage is of primary importance in the study of Christology. T. L. Trevethan writes:

"The foundation of the argument of the letter to the Colossians is found in 2:9-10. The gospel, Christian truth, has its source in Jesus. He is the crown of God's revelation because 'in Him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily' (Col. 2:9). There is no stronger statement of the full deity of our Lord Jesus in the Scripture" (*Our Joyful Confidence*. IVP, 1981, p. 13).

W. R. Nicholson says, "as a Christological statement, it has scarcely an equal, certainly no superior." Likewise, F. F. Bruce writes:

"This is one of the great Christological passages of the N.T., declaring as it does our Lord's divine essence, pre-existence, and creative agency" (*New International Commentary*, p. 192).

The deity of Christ (He possesses a fully divine nature [without compromising a fully human nature in His person]) is the foundation and focus of His uniqueness and Christian identity. This fact alone makes Him uniquely distinctive (in kind) from other religious leaders or anyone else, even in the face of increasing "New Age" ideology.

## The Background of Colossians

Why did Paul write to the Colossians? What issues was he trying to settle in this letter? Here scholars disagree, to some extent. All seem to feel that the Colossians were beset by a syncretism of religious streams. An incipient gnosticism with a Jewish influence seems to have been the problem.

The three streams of teaching flowing into the area were a declining Hellenism, paganism, and Judaism. The Judaistic influences were particularly puritanical and bred asceticism in the extreme. Some suspect possibly an Essene element or influence. The Hellenistic beliefs were an early Gnosticism, with its dualistic view of the universe (material vs. spiritual) leading to either asceticism or libertarianism. And the local pagan climate included superstitious occultism with mystical rites. These three streams tended to blend together into a pseudo-philosophical soup of mystery cults.

Hence, the issue which must have confronted the Colossian Christians was how Christ "fit into" such a culture (we see this sort of issue illustrated in Acts 19:13-16). The danger which they faced was in blending the pure Gospel of Christ with the "religiosophy" of the surrounding culture -- i.e., syncretistic Christianity. This same problem is a challenge we face today!

Paul writes to these believers to remind them of the preeminence of Christ and of what He has done for them, (i.e. His person and work), warning them against man-made religiosity, as well as instructing them in proper Christian conduct in light of these things. His purpose seems to be to counter the persuasive arguments of the false teachers who were apparently well-received at Colossae, and instead to help these believers on to a "true knowledge of God's mystery - Christ Himself" (2: 2-3).

Most important is the context beginning in verses 13-14, which prepares us for the section which follows: explaining that God the Father has graciously transferred the Colossians into a new spiritual sphere -- the "kingdom of His beloved Son." The thrust of this truth is plain: the Colossians are no longer a part of the evil, demonic world system.

### Exposition of 1: 15-23 (Background)

The Colossians belong to "the kingdom of God's beloved Son." Paul moves to consider the King of this kingdom. He demonstrates that Christ is preeminent in four areas:

- 1) Communication
- 2) Creation
- 3) the Church
- 4) the Christian individual.

Some view verses 15-20 of this text as an early Christian hymn (cf. also Phil. 2:6-11). Rhythmical prose with a strophic arrangement can be discerned. The analysis of Bruce at this point (following others) seems for the most part accurate. "The strophic arrangement is indicated by the repetition of key words or phrases. There appear to be two strophes in vs. 15-16 and 18b-20 with vs. 17-18a supplying a transitional link between them" (*Bib Sac* 1984, p. 100). Parallel phrases and reoccurring key words are clearly evident. That these verses constitute a "Christ Hymn" exalting the Son as the Supreme Lord seems a correct analysis.

## I. Christ is Lord of Communication 1:15 (the key verse)

Image (*eikon*) of the invisible God (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4), a word meaning likeness, representation, image, form, manifestation and reflection.

This is a relative term in which the degree of likeness must be inferred from the context. The word is used 23 times in the N.T., but only twice with reference to Jesus. For non-exact representation one may note Rom. 1:23 for idolatry in addition to the concept of man as the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27).

With reference to Christ (as here and 2 Cor. 4:4) it is used of precise and absolute correspondence, the perfect visible manifestation of our invisible God. He is the representation and manifestation of God who is invisible.

TDNT, II. 389, "The peculiarity of the expression is related to that of the ancient concept, which does not limit image to a functional representation present to human sense but also thinks of it in terms of an emanation, of a revelation of the being with substantial participation in the object ... It has a share in the reality. Indeed it is the reality. Thus *eikon*, does not imply a weakening or a feeble copy of something. It implies the illumination of *its inner core* and essence."

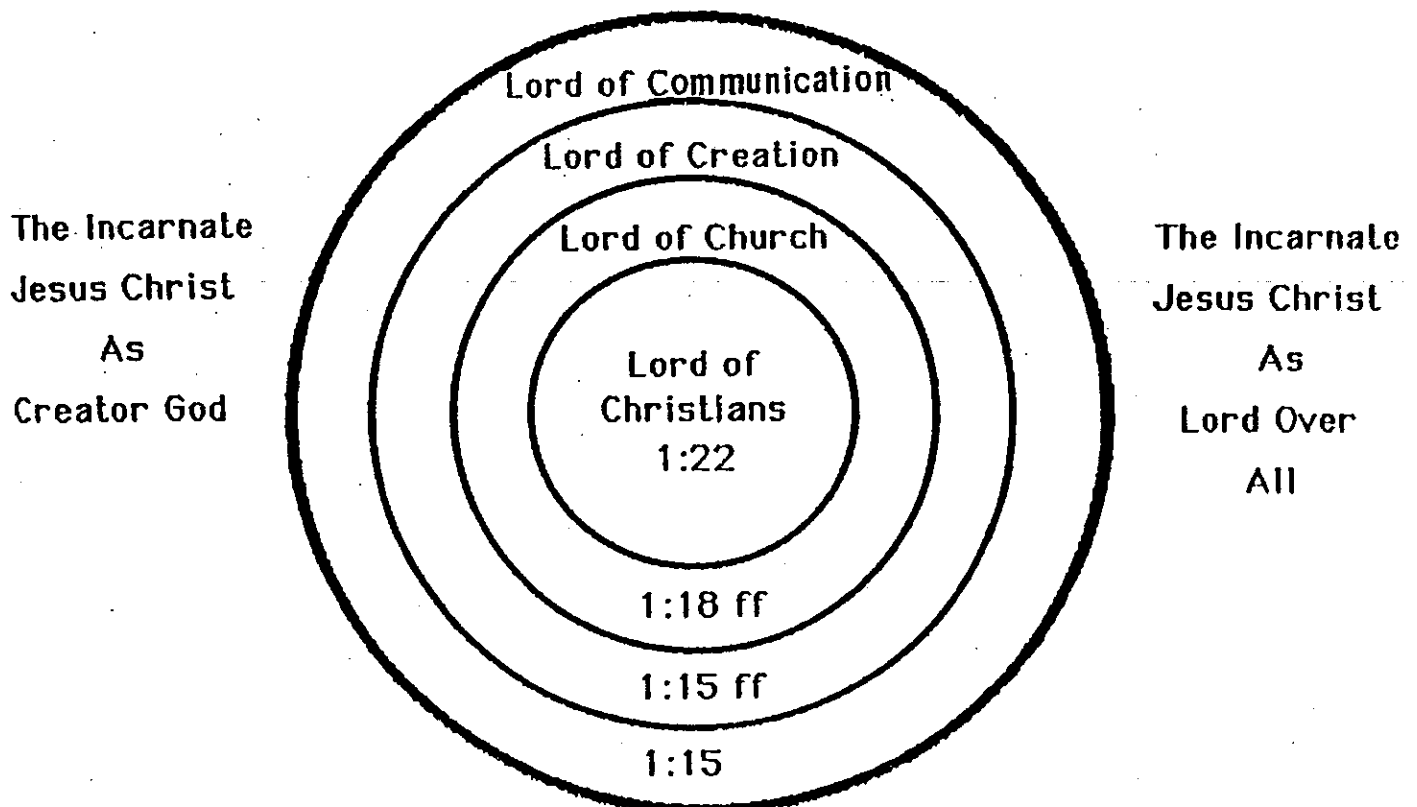
Vine writes: "the word involves the two ideas of representation and manifestation. 'The idea of perfection does not lie in the word itself, but must be sought from the context' (Lightfoot)" (*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 246, 2nd. section).

Again, an *eikon* can mean an inexact replica of something intended to stand for that something. For example, in Romans 1:23, men construct "images" of God and worship them as if they were God, even though they have no relationship to God.

Here, however, and in some other passages (e.g. 2 Cor. 4:4), *eikon* means that Christ is "essentially and absolutely the perfect expression and representation of the Archetype, God the Father ... 'the image of the invisible God' gives the additional thought suggested by the word 'invisible' that Christ is the visible representation and manifestation of God to created beings" (Vine, p. 247). Christ is (present tense) the image of God in the sense that the nature and being of God is perfectly revealed in Him. Adam may have been created in God's image, but Christ is God's image. He brings to light and makes knowable the God who, both to our physical and inward eyes, is invisible.

What is important to see here is that Paul wants the Colossians to realize that Christ is God. If you want to see and know God, then look at and believe in Christ. Christ is not simply a picture of what God is like; He is very God Himself. As Jesus said Himself, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9), and again "before Abraham was born, I Am" (John 8:58 - Exodus 3:14). This is an explicit affirmation of Christ's divine essence. Some see a "wisdom motif" behind Paul's use of the word as in Prov. 8:22-23; Ecclesiasticus 1:4-5; 24:9 (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24; Col. 2:3). Others identify an "Adam Christology" background (cf. Gen. 1:26 f). Helyer accurately notes that no single motif or theme is able to provide a comprehensive view of the Christ-Hymn. The soteriological context would point to the text as Paul's argument for affirming Christ as Lord, both of the cosmos (His material creation) and the Church (His spiritual creation).

## Christology in Colossians 1:15-23 (His Preeminence Over All Things)





## II. Christ is Lord of Creation

1: 15-17

Firstborn (*prototokos*) - both a "kind" word and a "time" word. It may be *either/or*, or both/and. Here it conveys the ideas of primacy, priority, and supremacy; of priority in time and supremacy in rank. The word thus has both a temporal and positional sense. To understand this term, particularly as it is applied to Christ, one must rid his mind of the idea that Christ is somehow the first of a lone succession of creatures. As we shall see, Christ is not a creature, but the Creator Himself. Moreover, this term especially points to the preeminence and pre-existence of Christ.

The term originally had the idea that the first son of the family inherited the rights of the family, name, property, etc ... In fact, in some cases, his primogeniture (i.e., his "*first-born-ness*") made him uniquely *eligible* to be the king. Psalm 89:27 should be noted in this context, pointing to Messiah's special position of honor.

In 1:15b, Paul has in mind that Christ is God the Father's first (and only) Son. Not that Christ was ever somehow "born" to God, but rather that in His relationship to the Father in the Trinity, He enjoys all of the rights and privileges which the Father bestows upon Him. This includes the right to oversee the creation of all things, a creation that was created by Him, for and in Him. He is creation's *conception*, continuance and consummation.

In Colossians it obviously has the nuance of supremacy and preeminence from the expressions which follow (16-17); source-agent and preserver of creation worthy of all honor. It is Christ as sustainer ("holds all things together") who makes the universe a cosmos instead of a chaos. A rare word in the N.T. *prototokos* is used twice here because of its emphasis upon divine preeminence as applied to the structure of the passage (universal creation and the new creation of the Church).

This is an explicit affirmation of Christ's divine function (or divine works). Paul's point is that Christ is the Creator, preeminent *over* every creature. A Jew such as Paul could only conceive of God as being the Creator. Further, since Christ created "all things," He Himself must be uncreated or the statement is untrue. Note that the word "create" occurs twice in v. 16, the first in the aorist tense and the second in the perfect. The aorist looks back to the creation as an act, while the perfect affirms it as still remaining, a testimony, monument and proof of His creative might. Therefore, Christ is God. He is pre-existent and pre-eminent over all creation as its' God.

PHILIPPIANS 4:18—COLOSSIANS 1:20 Supply. Primary 1274

that brings more credit to your account. 18 However, I have all things in full and have an abundance. I am filled, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the things from you, a sweet-smelling odor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. 19 In turn, my God will fully supply all your need to the extent of his riches in glory by means of Christ Jesus.

20 Now to our God and Father spirit you [show].  
21 Give my greetings to every holy one in union with Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send you their greetings. 22 All the holy ones, but especially those of the household of Caesar, send you their greetings.  
23 The undeserved kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ be with the spirit you [show].

## TO THE COLOSSIANS

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through God's will, and Timothy [our] brother 2 to the holy ones and faithful brothers in union with Christ at Co-lossee:

May you have undeserved kindness and peace from God our Father.

3 We thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ always when we pray for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in connection with Christ Jesus and the love you have for all the holy ones 5 because of the hope that is being reserved for you in the heavens. This [hope] you heard of before by the telling of the truth of that good news 6 which has presented itself to you, even as it is bearing fruit and increasing in all the world just as [it is doing] also among you, from the day you heard and accurately knew the undeserved kindness of God in truth. 7 That is what you have learned from Epaphras our beloved fellow slave, who is a faithful minister of the Christ on our behalf, 8 who also disclosed to us your love in a spiritual way.

9 That is also why we, from the day we heard [of it], have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the accurate knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual comprehension, 10 in order to walk worthily of Jehovah to the end of fully

pleasing [him] as you go on bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the accurate knowledge of God, 11 being made powerful with all power to the extent of his glorious might so as to endure fully and be long-suffering with joy, 12 thanking the Father who rendered you suitable for your participation in the inheritance of the holy ones in the light.

13 He delivered us from the authority of the darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, 14 by means of whom we have our release by ransom, the forgiveness of our sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; 16 because by means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All [other] things have been created through him and for him. 17 Also, he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist.

18 and he is the head of the body, the congregation. He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that he might become the one who is first in all things; 19 because God saw good for all fullness to dwell in him, 20 and through him

New World Translation  
of the Holy Scriptures

1275 Christ's fullness; head of government COLOSSIANS 1:21—2:14

to reconcile again to himself all [other] things by making peace through the blood [he shed] on the torture stake, no matter whether they are the things upon the earth or the things in the heavens.

21 Indeed, you who were once alienated and enemies because your minds were on the works that were wicked, 22 he now has again reconciled by means of that one's fleshly body through [his] death, in order to present you holy and unblemished and open to no accusation before him, 23 provided, of course, that you continue in the faith, established on the foundation and steadfast and not being shifted away from the hope of that good news which you heard, and which was preached in all creation that is under heaven. Of this [good news] I Paul became a minister.

24 I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for you, and I, in my turn, am filling up what is lacking of the tribulations of the Christ in my flesh on behalf of his body, which is the congregation. 25 I became a minister of this [congregation] in accordance with the stewardship from God which was given me in your interest to preach the word of God fully, 26 the sacred secret that was hidden from the past systems of things and from the past generations. But now it has been made manifest to his holy ones, 27 to whom God has been pleased to make known what are the glorious riches of this sacred secret among the nations. It is Christ in union with you, the hope of [his] glory. 28 He is the one we are publicizing, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in union with Christ. 29 To this end I am indeed working hard, exerting myself in accordance with the operation of him and which is at work in me with power.

2 For I want you to realize how great a struggle I am having in behalf of you and of those at Laodicea and of all those who have not seen my face in the flesh,

2 that their hearts may be comforted, that they may be harmoniously joined together in love and with a view to all the riches of the full assurance of [their] understanding, with a view to an accurate knowledge of the sacred secret of God, namely, Christ. 3 Carefully concealed in him are all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. 4 This I am saying that no man may delude you with persuasive arguments. 5 For though I am absent in the flesh, all the same I am with you in the spirit, rejoicing and beholding your good order and the firmness of your faith toward Christ.

6 Therefore, as you have accepted Christ Jesus the Lord, go on walking in union with him, 7 rooted and being built up in him and being stabilized in the faith, just as you were taught, overflowing with [faith] in thanksgiving.

8 Look out; perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ; 9 because it is in him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily. 10 And so you are possessed of a fullness by means of him, who is the head of all government and authority. 11 By relationship with him you were also circumcised with a circumcision [performed] without hands by the stripping off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision that belongs to the Christ, 12 for you were buried with him in [his] baptism, and by relationship with him you were also raised up together through [your] faith in the operation of God, who raised him up from the dead.

13 Furthermore, though you were dead in your trespasses and in the uncircumcised state of your flesh, [God] made you alive together with him. He kindly forgave us all our trespasses 14 and blotted out the handwritten document against

Watch Tower Bible and  
Tract Society (inc. 1976)

### III. Christ is the Lord of the Church

1:18-20

He is the head of the body (18a), the church. The church owes Him exclusive allegiance, complete devotion, and total obedience. This type of commitment is reserved, only for God, and thus for Christ because He is God. To be head of the church is to be its "directing brain," its sovereign, chief, leader. He guides and governs it. The pronoun ("he") is emphatic, meaning Christ and no other is head. He alone is its Lord and Ruler.

Notice that once again we have the term *prototokos* in v. 18b: "He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead." Beginning (Gr. *arche*) may mean: 1) supremacy in rank; 2) precedence in time or 3) creative initiative. All three ideas are true, though creative initiative seems to be the idea Paul desires to convey (Vaughn, Colossians, p. 41). We saw that *prototokos* had to do with reference to Christ's position as Creator of all things. It is a word denoting source and preeminence. Here, it has to do with the fact that He conquered death in His resurrection. He is sovereign even over death. "His resurrection is His title to the headship of the Church" (Abbott). Paul's point, therefore, is that Christ has full rights over the Church because He conquered the great enemy of man, death. In so doing, He proved Himself to be God! Hence, v. 18c sums up the matter: Christ should have first place in everything! He is the source of the Church's life and deserves all the rights which accrue to such a source (cf. 3:11).

Verses 19-20 demonstrate Christ's unique position as the Mediator who stands between God and man. Christ is able to do this first because He is fully God. This is the meaning of v. 19, where Paul explains that in Christ we see the very essence of God. "All the fullness" means that Christ lacks nothing of what it means to be God. He possesses all the attributes of God (e.g., saving grace, love, goodness, light, omniscience, etc.). The word "fullness" was probably a technical term in the vocabulary of the false teachers. Paul uses this word eight times in this letter. It has the sense of "undiluted," "unalloyed;" Christ is "pure deity," (i.e. "the sum total of all the divine power and attributes.").

The words, "dwell in Him" has the idea of continuum, to be at home permanently, to reside. There was never a time when Christ did not possess deity; He is always God.

Christ is able to mediate between God and man because he reconciled (brought together) them when He came as man and died on the cross (v. 20). The stunning import of v. 20 is that Christ as God allowed Himself to die as a man in order to do away with sin. He is thus the One who brings God and man together. His person and work are intimately tied together.

Paul's point, therefore, is that Christ is preeminent over the Church because He is head of the body, He has conquered death because He is fully God, and He has brought God and man together.

#### **IV. Christ is Lord of the Christian 1: 21-23**

Paul now applies the doctrine he has presented to the Colossian believers.

First, in vs. 21-22, he explains that Christ, the mediator, has been able to reconcile the Colossian Christians to God, despite their initial hostility and sin. II Cor. 5:17-21 informs us that reconciliation transforms men, appeases God's wrath and comes only through Christ, the sinless substitute.

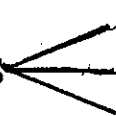
Secondly, Paul declares that Christ can be counted on to take the Colossians on to a complete spiritual transformation, so that they will become people acceptable to the Father. Their responsibility is to continue on in the faith as they originally heard it and believed it, and not to fall away into syncretistic errors. "Holy" means separated from sin and unto the Saviour for his service and sanctifying work. Here it has a positional sense meaning cleansed from all sin and looks to our relationship to God. "Without blemish" means faultless and relates to ourselves. "Free from accusation" means above reproach, unreprouvable, blameless. This phrase may look to our relation and status with others.

Hence, Christ's preeminence is of the utmost importance to the personal lives and destiny of the Colossian believers.

#### **Paul's Affirmation in Colossians 2:8-15 ( Our Position in Him )**

**As the Incarnate Savior God  
"Christ Jesus the Lord" provides  
a complete and sufficient  
relationship for His believers.**

**He removed the power of:**

**AT THE CROSS** 

- the flesh (illustration of circumcision) 2:11**
- sin and guilt (illustration of Baptism) 2:12-14**
- the demonic (illustration of victorious Emperor ) 2:15**

A supplement: 2: 9-10

v. 9 begins with "for," which means that Paul is giving the reason why the Colossians should avoid the false teachers and instead stick with Christ.

This reason is because in Him (Christ), "all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form." "In Him" is emphatic and exclusive emphasizing incarnation. It recalls 1:19. "All the fullness" emphasizes comprehensiveness and completeness. This reiterates that Christ is completely God: there is nothing about Christ that is not God; there is nothing about God that Christ is not.

The word here for "deity" (*theotes*) means that Christ is in His essence God! This is different from a similar word, *theiotes*, which means the possession of divine attributes (cf. Rom. 1:20). The word "dwells" (*katoikei*) is in an emphatic position and has a durative force. It means that there was never a time when Christ was not God (cf. 1:19). Paul takes this expression of Christ's deity one step further than in 1:19, by linking it with Christ's incarnation: "bodily form." Paul's point here is that Christ is fully God and fully man. (See Phil. 2:5-11). This verse is therefore one of the New Testament's best verses to show both Christ's deity and Christ's humanity, as well as to show that He is both fully God and fully man at the same time.

Paul goes on to say that this preeminent Christ is the One who has brought completion and filling into the emptiness of the Colossian believers' lives (2:10).

Christ is likewise the preeminent ruler (2:10b).

Christ, as the preeminent One, has completed all righteousness and has made the Colossians righteous through His Cross (2:11-12).

Christ has brought life to the spiritually dead Colossians, forgiving their sins and cancelling every accusation against them (2:13-14).

And Christ has disarmed and disgraced all the powers who have been holding the world in bondage (2:15).

Paul's point, therefore, in this section, is that Christ sets the Colossians free, through His work on the cross, in a way that the claims of the false teachers never can.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF FALSE PHILOSOPHY

1. After the tradition of man (Colossians 2:8)
2. After the rudiments of the world (Colossians 2:8)
3. Not after Christ (Colossians 2:8)

CHRIST IS NOT ITS:

SOURCE,

SUBSTANCE,

STANDARD.

CHRIST IS PREEMINENT IN:

Creation  
Heaven  
Redemption  
Salvation  
Truth

## CONCLUSION

The point to remember from Colossians 1-2 is that Christ is God. The key verses to show this are 1:15; 1:19 and 2:9. Christ is fully and completely God. "With the resurrection of Jesus the earliest community of believers confessed the Lordship of Jesus in terms of His victory over death and His vindication by God, but that this was quickly seen to entail nothing short of the position in creation ascribed to the Kyrios of the O.T. In brief, cosmic Christology was implicit from the beginning of the primitive Church" (Helyer, JETS, 177).

## *Colossians 1-2: Christological Summary*

### Christ is exclusively

- 1) εἰκών (eikon) image  
(1:15)=perfect (visible) revelation
- 2) πρωτότοκος (prototokos) Firstborn  
(1:15,18)=pre-eminent (divine) sovereign
- 3) πᾶν πλήρωμα (pan pleroma)  
all Fullness  
(1:19; 2:9)=pure deity  
θεότητος (theotetos) (2:9) Godhead
- 4) κατοικεῖ (katoikei) dwells  
(1:19,2:9)=permanent deity

Therefore, walk in Him  
(1:10:2:6)

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Col 1:15-20

Paul frequently states a belief in the deity of Jesus Christ. In Colossians 1:15-20 Paul states that the Son is the image of the invisible God. Paul also writes that he is the one in whom and through whom and for whom all things hold together.

Millard Erickson, Christian Theology Vol. 2, pg. 689

Paul's purpose in this passage is to show that Jesus Christ is first in everything. He assumes this position because he is the beginning of everything and the source for the existence of everything. He possesses chronological primacy over all that exists, except for the Father, because the Son is the image of the invisible God. He is even the source for the existence of the invisible powers that He created to exist in a perpetual state of goodness, though they revolted against Him and became the satanic opposition that He conquered on the cross.

He is the "firstborn of," a title of dignity. He is also the "firstborn from," a chronological designation of him as the beginning, the originator, the first of the line. He owns the double advantage of being "firstborn" - this makes him the heir of all things and the owner of all things, and as the beginner of all things. To all of this is added the idea of being the final destination of all things.

In everything Jesus Christ holds "first place." In addition to all of this, the preexistent Christ is also Jesus, the human in which all fullness dwells. It is He who made peace through his blood shed on the cross.

Gilbert Bilezikian, Christianity 101, pg.61

Paul says that Christ is the image of the invisible God. Jesus is such a reproduction or likeness of the God who is within himself invisible to men that this God becomes manifested or known to men. Jesus Christ occupies the position of authority and power in the creation. He is subject only to the father himself. All things, without exception, were created in him and through him. God creates, but he creates in and through the Son. He also saves in and through the Son. It can also be said that God has no relations with the world, either in a creative or redemptive sense, except through Christ. He is the agent of his outgoing energy and power. Christ is not the absolute source, but the mediating agent of creation.

W. T. Conner, A System of Christian Doctrine, pg 149

In verse 15, Christ is the perfect image of God, as men are not. As a result of this He has consciousness and will. He possesses all the attributes and powers of God. By using the word "image" Paul suggests the perfect equality with God which the title "Son" might at first seem to deny. The living image of God is equal to himself. The object of his infinite love can be nothing less than equal. It cannot be said that the image is precisely the repetition of the original it represents. It can be said that Christ is the revelation of the hidden Godhead.

A.H. Strong, Systematic Theology, pg. 336



Special note must be taken of the verb tense used in verse 15. Paul is viewing Christ according to His present being. He is viewing Him according to His present and permanent status of exaltation. In this he expresses not what Christ was, but who he is.

John Lange, Lange's Commentary On the Holy Scriptures (Gal-Col), pg. 20

Paul calls Christ the image of the invisible God (vs. 15). He is stating that it is through Him alone that God, who is otherwise invisible, is manifested to us. Christ is the image of God because he makes God visible to us. Because of this we must be careful not to seek God elsewhere, for outside of Christ, all that claims to represent God will turn out to be an idol.

John Calvin, Calvin's Commentaries, pg.312

In verse 15, Paul uses the phrase "the first-born of all creation." Does not this imply that the Son was at some point brought into existence by the Father? And if this is true of the Son, then it is necessarily true of the Holy Spirit as well. Contrary to the Arian position this text does not require this interpretation. The phrase used by Paul is better understood to mean that Christ has the rights and privileges of the "first-born." According to biblical usage this is the right of leadership or authority in one's family. Paul means that Christ possesses all the privileges of authority and rule that go along with being the firstborn, but in Christ's case it applies to whole of creation.

Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, pg. 243

In ancient philosophy the Logos was the ultimate, fundamental presupposition of thought. It was the firm support of the whole of philosophy. But the biblical idea of creation is based upon a different Logos. The Logos of the Bible is the Image of the "invisible God", "for through Him, and unto Him, are all things, and He is before all things, and in Him all things cohere". This is not an impersonal Logos of thought, but the

thought and will of God who meets us in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the origin and foundation of all existence.

Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, pg.308

Many of John's thoughts on Christology are echoed by Paul. He declares that, "all things were made by Him" (1:16). While Paul does not use the term "Word" in his text, the Logos idea is clearly present in statements like in Him "all things hold together" (v.17). Paul goes further than John by adding a teleological dimension to the character of Christ. He is the unitive principle of the universe, and He is also the goal toward which all creation is directed.

The New Testament speaks of the church as the body of Christ. He is the head of the body. The symbolism has its background in human anatomy more so than in the Old Testament. Both the relationship of the physical body to its head and the organic unity of the human body signify what is to be done of the church. Being the body of Christ, the church exists solely to do the will of Christ and doing so to be His presence in the world.

Stanley Grenz, Theology for the Community of God, pg. 136, 608

Paul states in verse 17 that "by him all things consist." The preservation of all things demands the constant exertion of the power employed in their creation. When we remember that God created all things visible and invisible and that all these things are kept in existence by him we should be filled with awe. The work of preservation is the work of Christ. Of Christ it is said, "And he is before all things and by him all things consist." Col. 1:17. Since He was before all things, He existed prior to the creation of all things by His power. Since their creation He has preserved them by the same power. Through Christ all things stand together and are kept in place. If Christ were not conserver and creator, all things would fall to pieces.

J. M. Pendleton, Christian Doctrines- A Compendium of Theology, pgs.50,85

In 1:18 Paul relates the headship of Christ to his preexistence and to his primeval creation of all created things. This conception is similar to that of the Johannine prologue. It is the Logos of God which is the source of all the substance and structure of reality. It is the divine activity by the creative and revelatory Logos that makes human knowledge possible.

Carl F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority Vol. V-God Who Stands and Stays, pg.336

Verse 18 addresses the pre-eminence of Christ. In relation to God, Christ is the image of the invisible God, God's representative and manifestation of Himself to the world. He is God in human likeness made visible to men that they might see him and know him and be assured of all he felt and purposed towards them. What we know of God we know through Christ. He was the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. He that has seen the Son has seen the Father.

What a wonderful thought it is that the world was created in Christ, that he is so intimately connected with all its details, that the laws by which it is guided, and the purposes which govern all its affairs had their origin in Jesus Christ.

Edward Hastings, The Speaker's Bible, pg. 161

The thought is not that a potential we all have (openness to the divine will) was supremely actualized in the life of Jesus. Rather, God is present in Jesus in the sense that "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." It is here in the person of Jesus Christ that the Word became flesh. Here the Word, who created all things, takes upon him our space and place in the most literal, tangible, and objective sense.

Paul K. Jewett, God, Creation, and Revelation- A Neo-Evangelical Theology, pg.415

## "The Lordship of Jesus Christ"

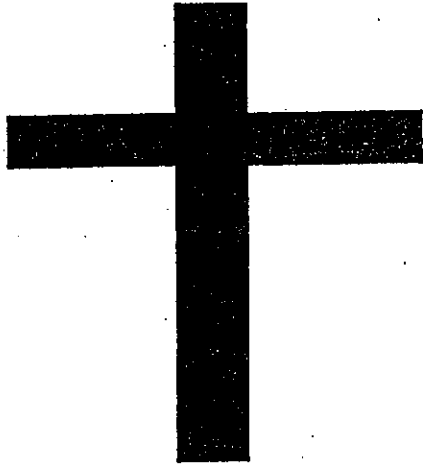
### Colossians 1: 13-20

- |      |  |          |
|------|--|----------|
| I.   | <u><b>Jesus is Lord of the Cross (Savior)</b></u><br>(This denies universalism/deism/fatalism)       | 1: 13-14 |
|      | 1. God has delivered us from the power of Satan.   | 1:13     |
|      | 2. God has transferred us into the principality of His sovereignty.                                  | 1:13     |
|      | 3. God has redeemed us through the payment of His Son.   | 1:14     |
| II.  | <u><b>Jesus is Lord of Communication (Revealer)</b></u><br>(This denies cultism/atheism/agnosticism) | 1:15     |
|      | 1. He is the representation of God. (His reflection)   |          |
|      | 2. He is the manifestation of God. (His revelation)  |          |
| III. | <u><b>Jesus is Lord of Creation (Creator)</b></u><br>(This denies evolution/naturalism)              | 1: 15-17 |
|      | 1. He is Lord because of His sovereignty.  | 1:15     |
|      | 2. He is Lord because of His agency.   | 1:16     |
|      | 3. He is Lord because of His priority.   | 1:17     |
|      | 4. He is Lord because of His consistency.  | 1:17     |
| IV.  | <u><b>Jesus is Lord of The Church (Leader)</b></u><br>(This denies individualism)                    | 1: 18-20 |
|      | 1. He is first.  | 1:18     |
|      | a. In position   |          |
|      | b. By resurrection   |          |
|      | 2. He has fullness.  | 1:19     |
|      | 3. He provides forgiveness.  | 1:20     |

# Hebrews 1-2: A Christological Summary

CHRIST IS: GOD'S SUPREME  
REVELATION  
AS THE SON OF GOD  
(1:1-4)

SUPERIOR  
TO  
ANGELS  
(1:5-2:18)



In His Divine  
Relationship  
1:5-6

As The Son  
of Man  
2:5-18

In His  
Divine  
Nature  
1:7-12

In  
Fulfillment  
of O.T.  
Prophecy  
2:5-9

In His  
Divine Position  
1:13-14

In His  
Atonement  
2:10-18

THEME

DAVIDIC

ADAMIC

Christology in Hebrews 1-2

## Introduction

Like Colossians 1-2, these two chapters are important Christological scripture. There are several parallels to Colossians, as well as John's prologue (John 1:1-18) and the Christ-hymn of Philippians (2:6-11). Here in Hebrews a number of distinctive contributions are made:

- 1) Christ as the climax of revelation
- 2) Christ as the fulfillment of the O.T.
- 3) Christ as the "better" or "superior" manifestation of God, especially in relation to Judaism (cf. 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24)
- 4) The Son as the "Davidic Messiah"
- 5) Christ work of atonement

The letter is addressed to a Jewish readership, one that is in danger of abandoning Christ and returning to Judaism and the O.T. cultic. Thus the letter is apologetic and hortatory as it admonishes its reader to remain faithful to the superior Christ.

## Exposition

Chapter 1 emphasizes the true deity of Christ, and His climatic revelation of God to man. Chapter 2 focuses upon His humanity, and especially His work of atonement. Thus a full-orbed Christology is present in these two chapters.

I. Christ is superior to the prophets 1:1-3

The Supremacy of Jesus Christ  
(Hebrews 1:1)

Supreme Spokesman	"spoken... by his Son"
Supreme Person	"his Son"
Supreme Privilege	"heir of all things"
Supreme Power	"by whom... he made the worlds"

2

1:1-2a emphasizes the climatic revelation of Christ. Prior revelation was partial and fragmented, but Christ's revelation is total and complete. Prior revelation was not less true or less worthy, but it was incomplete in contrast to the "last days" (final epoch or age) revelation via the Son.

1:3-14 These verses support the declaration made in 1:1-2a by 7 affirmations concerning the person and work of Christ in 1:2b-3, and 7 quotations from the O.T. in 1:5-14, with emphasis here upon His Sonship and Messianic office. 1:4 serves as the introduction to the 7 O.T. quotations and is transitional. There is a certain parallel pattern which can be discerned in chapter one. The comments of William Lane are noteworthy at this point:

In v. 1 the preacher directed attention to the human mediators of the old revelation—the prophets. In v. 4 he calls attention to the heavenly mediators of the old revelation—the angels. He thus frames what he has to say about God's Son, the mediator of the new revelation, with allusions to the mediators of the older revelation to which his friends had responded with respect and obedience. The frame serves to highlight the central importance of the new revelation through the Son.

In the second paragraph (1:5-14) the preacher brings together a chain of O.T. passages which demonstrate the superiority of the Son to the angels. His purpose is to lay a firm foundation for the solemn appeal he will make to pay the closest attention to the word spoken through God's Son (2:1-4). The several passages from the O.T. were carefully chosen to correspond to the declarations concerning the Son of God in the opening lines of the sermon. The string of quotations has been arranged to parallel and support the preacher's confession of Jesus as the Son of God.

1:1-4	1:5-13
A Appointment as royal heir (v. 2b)	A' Appointment as royal Son and heir (vv. 5-9)
B Mediator of the creation (v. 2c)	B' Mediator of the creation (v. 10)
C Eternal nature and pre-existent glory (v. 3a).	C' Unchanging, eternal nature (vv. 11-12)
D Exaltation to God's right hand (v. 3c)	D' Exaltation to God's right hand (v. 13)

The development in 1:5-14 thus documents the superiority of God's Son to the angels in a manner which reinforces the confession of his surpassing dignity in the Church. The correspondence between 1:1-4 and 1:5-14 helps us to see that both passages are confessional in nature.

The comparison between Jesus and the angels considers four points:

- 1) his name is greater than theirs:  
he is acclaimed as "my Son" (v. 5);
- 2) his dignity is greater than theirs:  
he is worthy of worship (v. 6);
- 3) his status is greater than theirs:  
he remains unchanged (vv. 7-12);

4) his function is greater than theirs:

he reigns at God's right hand (vv. 13-14).

(Lane, Call to Commitment, pp. 34-35)

## HEBREWS 1

THE THEME OF THE LETTER. 1:1-4 = CHRIST IS THE  
SUPREME REVELATION OF  
GOD

SUPPORTED BY

- 1) HEIR OF ALL
- 2) CREATOR OF ALL = DIVINE RELATIONSHIP
- 3) DIVINE ESSENCE
- 4) DIVINE NATURE = DIVINE NATURE
- 5) SUSTAINER OF ALL
- 6) SAVIOR OF BELIEVERS (CHAP. 2)
- 7) LORD OF ALL = DIVINE POSITION

THE THEME OF THE CHAPTER. 1:5-14 = CHRIST IS SUPREME  
OVER ANGELS

SUPPORTED BY

- 1) PSALM 2 ("FUTURE LESSON")
- 2) 2 SAMUEL 7 ("FUTURE LESSON")
- 3) DEUTERONOMY 32  
UNIQUE SON UNDER THE FATHER = DIVINE RELATIONSHIP
- 4) PSALM 104
- 5) PSALM 45 (CLEAREST)
- 6) PSALM 102  
ETERNAL SON WITHOUT A SUCCESSOR = DIVINE NATURE
- 7) PSALM 110  
SOVEREIGN SON OVER THE ANGELS = DIVINE POSITION

The 7 fold affirmation of 1:2b-3 is most important, and the following synopsis of each phrase points out the author's clear conviction of Christ's deity.

- 1) appointed heir of all things - (*hethaken kleronomon panton*) "appointed" is aorist indicative. Morris sees the idea of "designated in advance", but notes the emphasis is upon His being "heir." Heir denotes firm possession, and in this context denotes His dignity and greatness ("all things"). He is the Son in the highest place of rank and relationship.
- 2) through whom he made the universe - "make" is *epoiesen* (aor. ind). "Universe" is literally "ages" (*aionos*). The Son created the various periods of times as well as all worlds there may be. God created through the Son. The Son is the creator. The Son is God (cf. Prov. 8:22-31).
- 3) The Son is the radiance of God's glory - "radiance" or "brightness" (*apaugasma*, Gk.), may mean either the shining forth or outshining of brightness (active sense) or reflection of brightness (passive sense) or

the radiation through the source of light. It is as the sun radiates its rays of light. Either way we are told that in Christ the glory of God is visibly seen. God's glory shines out from Christ as sunlight from the sun (cf. John 1:14).

- 4) The exact representation of his being - "exact representation" is *charakter* (Gk.), from which we derive our English word character. It is hapax legomena. It means an impression, stamp, an exact reproduction. The Son is the precise expression of divine essence; He shows us exactly what God is. "Being" is *hupostasis* (Gk.), meaning essence, substance, nature. Thus Christ reveals to us exactly what and who God is (cf. John 14:9).
- 5) sustaining all things by his powerful word - The Son is creator and sustainer; He made it and maintains it (cf. Col. 1:15-17). The thought may also be He carries it along toward its goal. The emphasis on "his powerful word" is again noted in 11:3. Attention to "all things" only highlights again His greatness and sovereignty, i.e. His deity.
- 6) provided purification for sins - literally "cleansing of sins; Having made." (is an aor. mid. part.) The mid. suggest Christ Himself made purification. The aor. affirms completed action. "Sin," occurring 25 times in Hebrews, is the great barrier between God and man. Christ has solved the problem via a *katharismos* (Gk.), a cleansing. That Christ has taken care of our sin problem is a much discussed theme in Hebrews. Thus Christ's work is seen to naturally flow out of and is related to His divine/human person. Morris alludes to a number of these themes and points out:

Christ made propitiation for our sins (2:17), offered a sacrifice for sins (10:12), did away with sin (9:26), bore sin (9:28). Because of what He has done there is no longer a sacrifice for sin (10:18). Sins have been forgiven (10:18), God remembers them no more (10:17). Christ's death is a ransom to set people free from sins (even those committed in O.T. days, 9:15). By contrast, the older way could not deal with sin (10:1-2, 4, 6, 11). Clearly the writer sees the salvation Christ brought about as many-sided. Look at sin how you will, the Son has dealt with it.

(Morris, Hebrews, p. 20.)

- 7) sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven - Christ's divine position is affirmed here as well as His "finished work." He is now at highest place of honor as our Great High Priest, a theme further developed in the epistle.

#### OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

His Posture	— sitting
His Position	— at the right hand of the throne
His Place	— in the heavens
His Privilege	— a minister of the true tabernacle
His Presentation	— gifts and sacrifices
His Performance	— mediating a better covenant



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### The Superiority of Jesus Christ

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1. "Appointed heir of all things"
2. "Through whom . . . He made the world"
3. "The radiance of His glory"
4. "The exact representation of His nature"
5. "Upholds all things by . . . His power"
6. "Made purification of sins"
7. "Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty"

## II. Christ is superior to the angels: a synopsis 1:4b-14

(the first specific application flowing from Christ's lordship in 1:3 in connection with 1:13. Applications to Moses, Aaron, and us is made in chs. 3-13)

- 1) As supreme Lord over angels: the thrust of this passage is that angels are subordinate servants under God and unworthy of worship, while Christ is sovereign Lord worthy of all worship.
- 2) As supported by seven passages: the structural keys are three proclamations from the Father to the Son in contrast to angels (5a, 7a, 13a).
  - A) The unique Son is fulfiller of the Davidic promises (Ps. 2:7 [cf. 5:5], 2 Sam. 7:14, Deut. 32:43), 4b-6; as Davidic king He is the divine Son in the triune sense; divine relationship.
  - B) The unique Son is possessor of divine attributes, esp. eternity (Ps. 104:4, Ps. 45:6-7, 102:25-27), 7-12; as the fulfiller of Davidic kingship He is Son without successor (8a, 12b); divine nature.
  - C) The unique Son is divine Lord (Ps. 110:1), 13-14; as the fulfiller of Davidic kingship He is sovereign over angels who serve; divine position.

## Christ's Superiority in Hebrews 1

### Jesus is Greater Than the Prophets 1:1-3 Seven Character Affirmations

### Jesus is Greater Than the Angels 1:4-14 Seven Scripture Affirmations

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Heir of all things	(v.2)	Psalms 2:7	(v.5)
Creator	(v.2)	2 Samuel 7:14	(v.3)
Manifestation of God's Being	(v.3)	Deuteronomy 32:43 or Psalm 97:7	(v.6)
Perfect Representation of God	(v.3)	Psalms 104:4	(v.7)
Sustainer of all things	(v.3)	Psalms 45:6,7	(vv.8,9)
Savior	(v.3)	Psalms 102:25-27	(vv. 10-12)
Exalted Lord	(v.3)	Psalms 110:1	(v.13)

### III. Christ is Superior in His Salvation 2:5-18

These verses, in essence, continue the theme of Christ's superiority over the angels. They further serve as an exposition of Ps. 8:4-6. A number of crucial truths are present emphasizing that Christ has fulfilled man's sovereign role over the earth by redeeming us via the assumption of a human nature.

Christ has:

- 1) suffered death (v. 9)
- 2) tasted death for everyone (penal substitution, v. 9)
- 3) brought many sons to glory (v. 10)
- 4) been perfected (experientially as a man) through suffering (v. 10)
- 5) destroyed the devil (v. 14)
- 6) freed us from the devil - (victory motif, v. 15)
- 7) shared in our humanity and been made like us without sin (vv. 14, 17-18; 4:15)
- 8) become a merciful and faithful High Priest (v. 17-18)
- 9) made atonement (satisfaction/propitiation) for sins (v. 17)

These verses demonstrate:

- 1) a full-orbed Christology
- 2) reveal how fully intertwined is A) the deity (ch. 1) and B) the humanity (ch. 2) of Christ
- 3) how intimately related is the
  - A) person of Christ, and
  - B) work of Christ

### CONCLUSION

The author's proof of Christ's deity on the basis of the O.T. rests on His divine relationship, nature, and position. As such. He is uniquely worthy of worship without alternative or competition.

These proofs based on Christ's divine work and nature fit a pattern of apostolic defense of the deity of Christ, but also His humanity.

# The Fulfillment of the Old Testament in Christ

## Hebrews 1-2

IN RELATION TO  
OLD TESTAMENT  
PROPHETIC  
REVELATION

He is the final  
Word.

Hebrews 1:1

HE IS THE  
SON OF DAVID

The Sovereign  
Messiah

Compare  
Luke 24:26  
with  
Psalm 2

"BETTER"

(He is God's  
best in  
every way.)

God's Saving Son  
Sovereign, Divine  
Hebrews 1:2-2:18

## JESUS CHRIST: GOD'S VERY BEST

*Hebrews 1:1-4*

- I. If you want to hear God, listen to Jesus. (vs.1-2)
  - A) God's revelation through His prophets was true, but partial. (vs.1)
  - B) God's revelation through His Son is true and perfect. (vs.2)
  
- II. If you want to see God, look at Jesus. (vs.2)
  - A) He is the divine *inheritor*. (vs.2)
  - B) He is the divine *creator*. (vs.2)
  - C) He is the divine *revealer*. (vs.3)
  - D) He is the divine *character*. (vs.3)
  - E) He is the divine *sustainer*. (vs.3)
  - F) He is the divine *redeemer*. (vs.3)
  - G) He is the divine *Savior*. (vs. 3)
  
- III. If you want to worship God, lift up Jesus. (vs.4)
  - A) He is not an esteemed servant. (vs.4; also vs.13-14)
  - B) He is the exalted Son. (vs.4; also vs.5)

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### The Superiority of Jesus Christ

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1. "Appointed heir of all things"
2. "Through whom . . . He made the world"
3. "The radiance of His glory"
4. "The exact representation of His nature"
5. "Upholds all things by . . . His power"
6. "Made purification of sins"
7. "Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty"

"You mean if God was walking here, like we are?" she asks, then looks out to the deserted market area, a blank canvas on which to dream up an image.

"If God was coming down the Farmers Market, I think he would have dark skin — not black, but like one of the wise men," she says.

He would be wearing pants, a shirt and coat, she said. All dark.

And she would notice him right away. Even in the Saturday crowd.

"If God walked up there to me and said, 'I want 5 pounds of sweet potatoes ...' I think his voice and the way he asked for them, I would say, 'Who are you? Do I know you?'"

"And he would know my name."

I hear the words of "One of Us" and I think of what we have been given to work with: On religious greeting cards, mass cards and candles, Jesus — made in his father's image — has long brown hair, soft brown eyes, a beard.

And I think of the time I met the Dalai Lama, who some believe is God-like, and how he was so normal. He wore Rockports and brown socks, the kind you could get at Sears. He sipped hot water from a china cup and smiled a lot.

What about God? Would we know him if we saw him?

Maybe not, says Shawn Henson, 31, a Duke divinity student sitting in Duke Chapel, an open Bible in his lap.

"I think God would be just a normal, ordinary person," he says.

"Not too handsome, not too ugly," he says. "I mean, it is the spirit of God to identify more with the humble, the low, the oppressed, so everyone would be comfortable in his presence."

Outside, Scott Kross, 21, a senior political-science major, scowls.

"God is too infinite to try to describe," he says. "God is the uniqueness in everybody all put together. He is the trees, the gardens, the Grand Canyon."

Just then, the clouds lift, revealing a blue sky, a blinding sun. There he is, I think. There you are.

And I hum all the way to the car.

If you have a comment or a suggestion for Nicole Brodeur, you can call her at 829-8930, or send her a message at her Internet address ([brodeur@nando.net](mailto:brodeur@nando.net)).

## Could God ever be 'One of Us'?

For weeks now, Joan Osborne's "One of Us" has been running through my head. Not a surprise, as the song — Grammy-nominated, No. 12 with a bullet — is all over the radio.

But more than its catchy melody, it's the question the song



NICOLE  
BRODEUR

poses that keeps it with me, that stops me in my tracks, that leaves me gazing out into the middle distance, wondering:

"What if God was one of us? Just a slob like one of us? Just a stranger on the bus, trying to make his way home?"

At a bus stop on Martin Street in Raleigh, I find Don Sellers. He is 49, lives in Raleigh. And a carpenter.

"So was Jesus," he tells me between drags of his cigarette.

God? That's a difficult question to ask out here in the cold, he tells me. He's waiting for the bus, headed for the shower, then a haircut, then "a person."

He smiles. Takes another drag.

"I have no idea what God looks like," Sellers says. "He's good, all right. Without a doubt. He's a spirit. He's a feeling. Something to look up to. He's somewhere I want to be."

"I'd like to meet him, someday, be up there with him. If I'm worthy."

He looks down the street for the bus. Or maybe he is watching his answer tumble down the street, because he turns to me and says, "That's a heck of a question."

Ithel Barefoot, 73, stops sweeping her booth at the Farmers Market, sets her mottled, leathery farm hand on the tip of her broom and takes in my question.

## The Structural Emphasis of John 1

Logos in the beginning was with God at Creation  
(1:1a-b with 2-3)

Logos in essence is God (1c with 4-5)

deity

witness

[5b implies] witness to deity (6-8)  
and response to deity (9-13)

wrath

negative (9-11)

positive (12-13),

spiritually born  
children leads to

love

Only Begotten Logos as incarnation among men (14-18)

[14b implies] witness to humanity (15)  
and reception of salvation (16-17)

humanity

Only Begotten God as explanation among men (18)

summary

### The Prologue of John/The Christology of John

#### Introduction

20th century man has difficulty with the deity of Christ (New Ageism, Mormonism etc; with its redefinition of deity is changing this somewhat). 1st century peoples actually had more difficulty with His humanity, and so John wrote to give an answer to their confusion. John's prologue (1:1-18), as well as other parts of his gospel, draws together several facets of Christology:

- 1) It reaffirms Christ deity (cf. Colossians 1-2; Hebrews 1-2).
  - A) He is the Logos (revelation/communication)
  - B) He is Life (creation/salvation)
  - C) He is Light (salvation/revelation)
- 2) It sets forth Christ incarnation, tying together His deity and humanity.
- 3) It emphasizes His unique relationship to the Father and provides content for development of the doctrine of the Trinity.
  - A) He is the revealer of the Father (1:18; 14:9)
  - B) He is the mediator of the Father (14:6)

In sum, a number of important themes are again expressed:

- 1) essential oneness of the Father and the Son
- 2) distinctiveness of persons within the Godhead

### 3) functional subordination of the Son to the Father

#### Significance of Logos

#### Background of the term

I. Logos (Word) is a word with a rich and varied history, and therefore it has been much debated. The following have been set forth as the source for John's concept and usage:

- 1) Palestinian Judaism - Wisdom is often personified (cf. Eccclus. 24) and this usage is found in the Targums. Rabbi's would use the word memra as a periphrasis for "God." Thus logos is the wisdom or thought of God.
- 2) Greek philosophy - Here it usually stood for "reason," reflecting the Greek view that divinity cannot come into direct contact with evil matter. The Stoics saw it as both divine reason and reason distributed in the world (and therefore the mind). It is a creative force, the rational principle of order.
- 3) Hellenistic Judaism - Prominent for example in Philo (the term appears over 1300 times), the Word is fully personified in relation to creation, being the means whereby God creates the world from great waste, and more over, is the way in which God is known in the mind. Again, however, the Word is not personal or pre-existent.
- 4) Hermetic Literature - Occurring frequently and being post-Christian, it is influenced by Hellenistic Judaism.
- 5) O.T. - Here the "Word of God" is seen as:
  - A) the agent of creation (Gen. 1; Ps. 33:6 ff; Prov. 8:22 ff)
  - B) the agent of revelation (Gen. 12:1, 15:1, 22:11, Prov. 8; Is. 9:8; Jere. 1:4; 20:8; Ezk. 33:7; Amos 3:1, 8)
  - C) eternal (Ps. 119:89)
  - D) the agent of redemption (Ps. 107:20)

F. F. Bruce notes, The 'word of God' in the O.T. denotes God in action, especially in creation, revelation, and deliverance (Bruce, The Gospel of John, p. 29).

#### II. John's Logos Doctrine

John utilized this word because of its capacity to communicate to multiple cultures, i.e. Jew and Greek. The term itself was well known, but John fills it with "new meaning." Philo's logos was "reason" and an "it." John's logos is "the word" and a "He." John's logos is not only God's agent in creation, He is God. He is God's personal, visible (1:14) communication to man in revealing and redeeming power. Logos does not explain Jesus; Jesus explains and fills with new meaning logos. Wisdom has become a person, divine reason a man. Walls notes at this point, "It is not accidental that both the gospel and Christ who is its subject are called 'the word ...' the use of 'Logos' in the contemporary

hellenistic world made it a useful 'bridge word.'" To the Greeks logos is reason. To the Jews logos is the word/wisdom. In John, these ideas find new meaning as they are embodied in a person.

\* Jesus is the personal communication, revelation and expression of God.\*

### Exposition of the Prologue (1:1-18)

#### "When God Became A Man" John 1:1-18

- I. As the Word of God Jesus continually pre-existed 1:1-5
  - 1) He is said to be divine in His person 1:1
  - 2) He is said to be divine in His relation 1:2
  - 3) He is said to be divine in His creation 1:3
  - 4) He is said to be divine in His revelation 1:4-5
    - a) He is life 1:4
    - b) He is light 1:4-5
- II. As the Word of God Jesus was prophetically witnessed 1:6-9
  - 1) The witness came with power 1:6
  - 2) The witness came with a pronouncement 1:7
  - 3) The witness came with purpose 1:7
  - 4) The witness came with perspective 1:8-9
- III. As the Word of God Jesus was personally confronted 1:10-13
  - 1) Some rejected Him in unbelief 1:10-11
  - 2) Some received Him with faith 1:12-13
- IV. As the Word of God Jesus was permanently incarnated 1:14
  - 1) He took a body like us
  - 2) He tabernacled among us
  - 3) He transformed our understanding within us
- V. As the Word of God Jesus is properly exalted 1:15-17
  - 1) He is properly exalted because of His coming 1:15
  - 2) He is properly exalted because of His blessings 1:16-17
- VI. As The Word of God Jesus perfectly communicated 1:18
  - 1) His communication is perfect because of His essence
  - 2) His communication is perfect because of His exegesis

#### NOTES

- 1:1 Although verbally parallel with Gen. 1:1 and 1 John 1:1, the contexts assign temporal differences. Whereas Gen. 1:1 speaks of the beginning of creation and 1 John 1:1 emphasizes the incarnate manifestation of God in Christ, John in this verse establishes the preexistence of Christ in eternity past. He already "was" when the beginning took place. Indeed He is affirmed as being: 1) Coequal, 2) Coeternal, 3) Coexistent and 4) Consubstantial with the Father. Jesus is called "Word" (Logos, Gk.). The idea of the Logos was a philosophical issue in John's day, but John uses the word in a larger sense that would include Hebrew ideas also.

To the Hebrew, 'the word of God' was the self-assertion of the divine personality; to the Greek the formula denoted the rational mind that ruled the universe. John



is asserting that the 'Word' is the source of all that is visible and antedates the totality of the material world. The use of logos implies that John was endeavoring to bring out the full significance of the Incarnation to the Gentile world as well as the Jewish people (Tenney, John, EBC, 28).

The word in our text then has reference to a unique communication of God to man, which He accomplished in human flesh (v. 14) through the Logos, Jesus, the Son of God. But that the Logos predated philosophical conceptions of logos is clearly seen in these words, "In the beginning was [en, Gk.] the Logos." The verb is in the imperfect tense in Greek, indicating continuing action in past time. Literally then, John declares that in the beginning Logos existed. He is none other than God Himself, not only bringing the Word but incorporating it in His own person, life, and being. Furthermore, this Logos was "face to face with" God, indicating a distinction of persons within the Godhead as well as an equality of persons. Finally, the Logos is eternally God. There was never a time when the Logos was not fully God. The word order in Greek emphasizes "God was the Word." Cults such as the Jehovah's Witness have often seized this verse for denial of the full deity of Christ. Noting the absence of the definite article before the word "God," they offer as an alternate and correct translation: The Word was "a god" (underlining mine). This translation, however, reveals again the ignorance of Greek grammar by the cults. The comments of Tenney are again appropriate here:

The three statements of v. 1 bring out three different aspects of the nature of the Word. The first speaks of his preexistence. The second statement, "The Word was with God," is an assertion of the Word's distinctiveness. The preposition pros indicates both equality and distinction of identity. Robertson says, "The literal idea comes out well, 'face to face with God'" (RHG, p. 623). Thus this implies personality and coexistence with God. Robertson says it bespeaks of "the fellowship between the Logos and God."

The third statement, "The Word was God," is especially significant. This is a clear statement of deity inasmuch as the noun theos ("God"), is anarthrous; that is, it lacks the article. Much confusion has spawned over this point of Gk. grammar. Robertson et al. have aptly demonstrated that the lack of the article in the predicate is intentional so that the subject can be distinguished. In other words, in the

phrase theos en ho logos ("God was the Word"), were it not for the article ó(ho) before the word logos, the subject of the phrase would be indeterminate. But the presence of the article shows that it is the "Word" that is the subject. The fact that theos is a predicate shows that it is describing the nature of the Word; he is of the same nature and essence as the noun in the predicate; that is, the Word is divine (RHG, p. 767).

E. C. Colwell says that "a predicate nominative which precedes the verb cannot be translated as an indefinite or 'qualitative' noun solely because of the absence of the article; if the context suggests that the predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite noun in spite of the absence of the article. In the case of a predicate noun which follows the verb the reverse is true; the absence of the article in this position is a much more reliable indication that the noun is indefinite" ("A Definite Rule for the use of the Article in the Greek New Testament," JBL 52 [1933]: 20-21).

To say that the absence of the article bespeaks of the nonabsolute deity of the word is sheer folly. There are many places in this Gospel where the anarthrous theos appears (e.g., 1:6, 12, 13, 18), and not once is the implication that this is referring to just "a god." (Temney, John, EBC, 29-30).

Consequently, one may observe that at the very outset of John's gospel he states his thesis, namely, that Jesus is the eternal God of the ages come in human flesh. "'The Word' was deity, one with God, rather than 'a god' or another being of the same class ... Unity of nature rather than similarity or likeness is implied. The external coexistence and unity of the Word with God is unmistakably asserted" (Temney, John, EBC, 28). This serves as the basis for all that follows in the book.

- 1:3 Not a single thing that exists came into being except through Him. This truth is also affirmed in Col. 1:16 and Heb. 1:2. Divine preexistence, work and association are all affirmed. That He created all things logically leads to the conclusion that He Himself is not created. As Bruce asserts: "When heaven and earth were created, there was the Word of God, already existing in the closest association with God and partaking of the

essence of God. No matter how far back we may try to push our imagination, we can never reach a point at which we could say of the Divine Word, as Arius did, 'There once was when He was not.'

(Bruce, p. 31). Couple this with the fact a Jew would only know the God of Genesis 1-2 as the Creator, and you have further evidence of the full deity of Jesus.

1:5 The light can never be conquered: it keeps on shining (pres. tense). The darkness attempts to "overcome or comprehend the light," but is unsuccessful. One of the great contrasts of this Gospel is that of light and darkness. By his use of the word "light," John affirms the absolute perfection, the utter purity and holiness which shines forth from God. Christ as "the light" provides spiritual illumination and knowledge of God because He is God. Further, because Christ became man and mediates between God and man, He is able to impart knowledge, holiness and purity to believers.

1:6-8 John the Baptist is divinely commissioned to attest to the truth about Christ the "Life" (a word occurring 36 times in John's gospel) and the "Light" in order that men might believe. To understand what John is getting at here, one must appreciate his unique use of the term "life." When John speaks of "life and "death," he uses these terms to describe one's relationship to God. The one who has a relationship with God (through Christ) has "life" because he knows God. The one who does not have a relationship with God (apart from Christ) is "dead" because he does not know God. In short, to know God is to experience the life of God. That is why believers are said to inherit "eternal life"; like God, they will live forever, because He has promised to share His life with them. Notice, also, that John constantly ties life and light together throughout his writings (1:4; 8:12).

- 1) Life is the complement of light; they always go together. If life refers to relationship with God, then it follows that light should mean an awareness of God's righteous standard and a conformity to it.
- 2) Hence, as one pursues his "life" in God, he will find himself pursuing the "light" which God brings, ultimately leading to Christlikeness. This is why John speaks of "walking in the light" and the fact that "we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:1-3).

One of John's favorite terms is matureo (Gk.), used forty-seven times in the Johannine corpus and translated "witness," "testimony," or "record." There are seven who "bear witness to" ("attest," "substantiate") the veracity of Christ's claims: 1) the Father (5:37; 8:18), 2) Christ Himself (8:14, 18, 37), 3) the Spirit (15:26; 16:14), 4) the works of Jesus (5:36; 10:25), 5) the Scriptures (5:39), 6) John the Baptist (1:6-8), and 7) other men (4:39; 12:17; 15:27).

1:7 Another great theological term in John's Gospel is "believe." It means to trust or have faith that Christ is sufficient to save in exactly the way He promised. The word is used about 100 times in this book.

1:9-10 This verse teaches that the Son was the true light who was coming (incarnation) into the "world" (a word used 77 times in John's Gospel). Verse 10 states that despite the incarnation, the world never at any point knew Him. The word "know" speaks of a knowledge born out of personal experience.

1:11-13 One of the saddest commentaries in the book is this: "He came to His own" (the world, places, things), but "His own" (people, nation) did not receive Him but rejected Him (the Greek aorist tense denotes a decisive act). Men are condemned for their rejection, not their ignorance. Rejection, however, has its counterpart in reception; God "gave" the grace so people would accept who and what the person is. Being a child of God does not come about by human physical descent nor is it attributed to human volition or the action of men. It is a sovereign work of God that provides for and accomplishes our salvation.

#### THE PROLOGUE OF JOHN (1:1-18)

1:1	The Word was in the beginning	The Word was with God	The Word was God
1:14	The Word became flesh	We beheld His glory	Glory of the only begotten Son
1:18	No man has seen God at any time	The only begotten God ...in bosom of Father	He hath revealed Him

1:14 Perhaps the heresy of incipient Gnosticism which claimed that Jesus only seemed to be human is what John combats here. John insists that Christ is truly human: he was tired and thirsty (4:6-7); He wept (11:35); He was troubled in spirit (12:17; 13:21), and He died (19:30). Without becoming less than God (cf. Phil. 2:5-11), Jesus took upon Himself complete human nature. Indeed John affirms "He became flesh" (sarx, Gk.). At His incarnation, God did not become man; He became God-Man. [The words "dwelt among us]" (eskēnōsen, Gk.) can be understood to mean "pitched his tent" or "tabernacled among us." John could therefore speak of hearing, seeing, and touching Him (1 John 1:1 ff). Just as the Heb. shekinah ("glory"), the bright cloud of God's glorious person settled upon the Tabernacle (Ex. 24:16; 40:35), even so in Christ, God's glorious person dwelt among men and they beheld, gazed upon examined His glory (see chart: The Prologue of John's gospel).

1:16-17 The Christian's experience of grace begins with the reception of the riches of His grace ("fullness") and is progressive and limitless. Its source is Christ's abundant person (cf. Phil. 4:19). Indeed there was grace in the Law which came through Moses, but the grace

of God which appeared at the incarnation overwhelms all previous manifestations.

- 1:18 John is conveying the fact that God chose to reveal Himself physically in Christ. "The only begotten Son" (monogenes, Gk.), means "one of a kind," unique, "without precedent." Some manuscripts read "the only begotten God." Bosom denotes the closest possible relationship between Father and the Son. The sense is the same regardless of the correct reading. The abrupt statement about a 'begotten Son or God' is seen by some as an intimation of the virgin birth. The Logos, who is the Son, "has declared" God. He is indeed the interpreter, exegete (exēgēsato, Gk.), leading out and explaining God to man. In John's gospel, The Logos explains God both by words (7 discourses and 7 "I AM" statements) and works. 7 sign miracles signify by works the deity of The Logos.

#### THE SEVEN SIGN MIRACLES OF JESUS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

2:1-11	Jesus turns water into wine
4:46-54	Jesus heals a nobleman's son
5:1-16	Jesus cures a paralytic
6:1-15	Jesus feeds five thousand men
6:16-21	Jesus walks on water
9:1-42	Jesus heals a blind man
11:1-57	Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead

#### THE "I AM" STATEMENTS OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

Twenty-three total times we find our Lord's meaningful "I am" in this gospel (4:26; 6:20, 35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12, 18, 24, 28, 58; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 13:19, 14:6; 15:1, 5; 18:5, 6, 8). From these we can identify those in which He joins His "I am" with seven tremendous metaphors which are expressive of his saving relationship toward the world.

- "I AM the Bread of Life" (6:35, 41, 48, 51).
- "I AM the Light of the World" (8:12).
- "I AM the Door of the Sheep" (10:7, 9).
- "I AM the Good Shepherd" (10:11, 14).
- "I AM the Resurrection and the Life" (11:25).
- "I AM the Way, the Truth, the Life" (14:6).
- "I AM the true Vine" (15:1, 5).

- 8:58 The absolute emphatic declaration "I am" (ego eimi, Gk.) is reminiscent of Ex. 3:14 where the words stand for the eternal person of YAHWEH (Heb.). The LXX translators render the phrase of Ex. 3:14 identically with that of John 8:58. Therefore, there is no doubt that Christ's use of this

unusual form of identification intends to reveal Him as God. Certainly His listeners understood Him this way (v. 59).

#### C. S. Lewis on Jesus' Claim to Deity

Mere  
Christianity  
pp. 54-55.

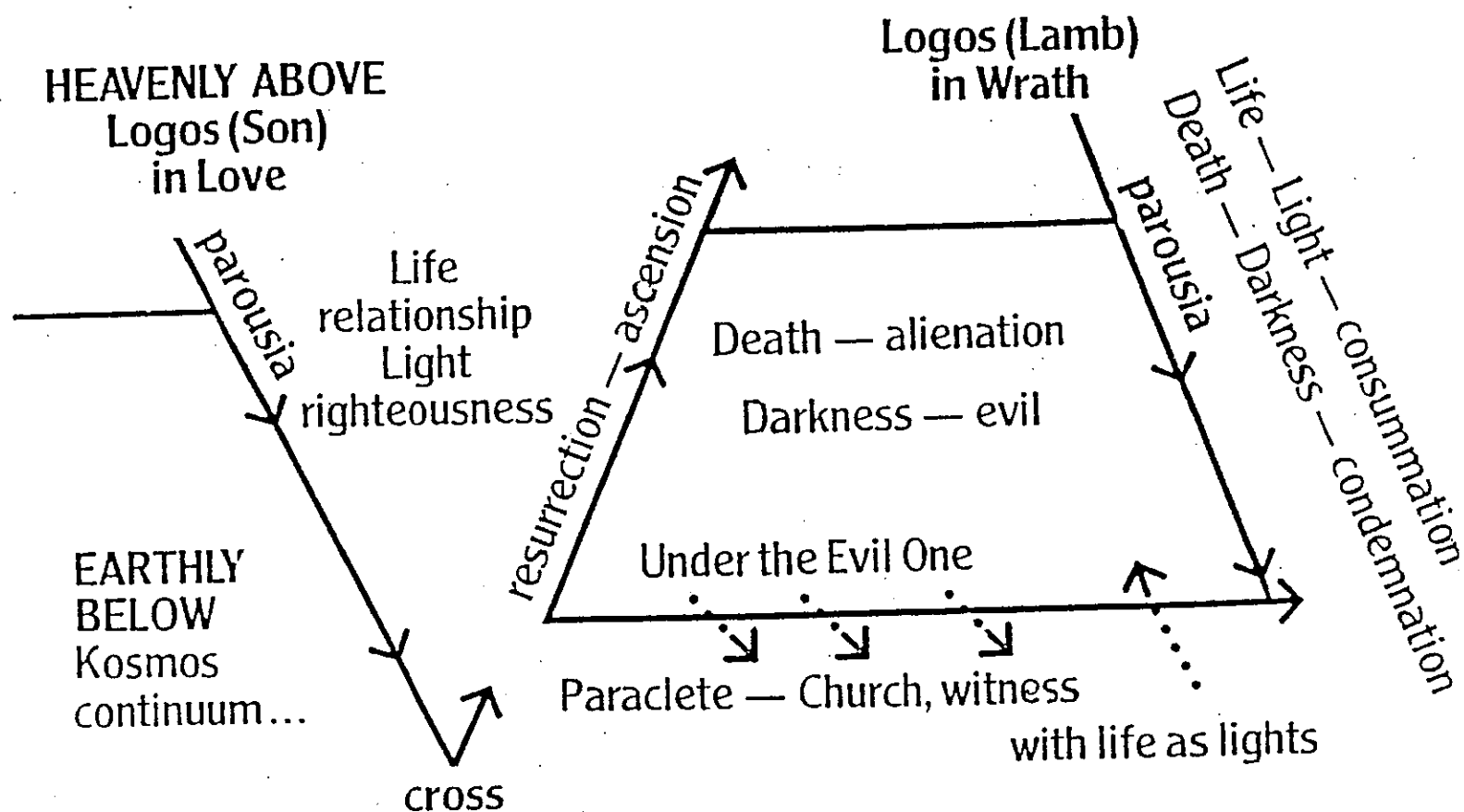
Among these Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God ... He says He has always existed ... Among Pantheists ... anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God: there would be nothing very odd about it. But this man, since He was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God. God, in their language, meant the Being outside the world Who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips.

That Jesus is to be identified as the God of the O.T. is further demonstrated by the numerous titles and works of the O.T. God which are also attributed to Jesus as the following chart demonstrates.

#### JESUS IS JEHOVAH

Of Jehovah	Mutual Title or Act	Of Jesus
Isa. 40:28	Creator	John 1:3
Isa. 45:22; 43:11	Saviour	John 4:42
1 Sam. 2:6	Raise dead	John 5:21
Joel 3:12	Judge	John 5:27 cf. Matt. 25:31 ff.
Isa. 60:19-20	Light	John 8:12
Exodus 3:14	I Am	John 8:58, 18:5-6
Ps. 23:1	Shepherd	John 10:11
Isa. 42:8, cf. 48:11	Glory of God	John 17:1,5
Isa. 41:4; 44:6	First and Last	Rev. 1:17; 2:8
Hosea 13:14	Redeemer	Rev. 5:9
Isa. 62:5 (and Hosea 2:16)	Bridegroom	Rev. 21:2 cf. Mt. 25:1 ff.
Ps. 18:2	Rock	1 Cor. 10:4
Jer. 31:34	Forgiver of Sins	Mark 2:7, 10
Ps. 148:2	Worshipped by Angels	Heb. 1:6
Throughout O.T.	Addressed in Prayer	Acts. 7:59
Ps. 148:5	Creator of Angels	Col. 1:16
Isa. 45:23	Confessed as Lord	Phil. 2:10

## The Antitheses of John



### Exposition of John 14:1-11

This text contains several important emphases:

- 1) Comfort in light of Christ's near departure 14:1-5
- 2) A word of soteriological insight 14:6
- 3) A word of Trinitarian revelation/relations 14:6-11

This text is thematically related to 1:1-18 and 8:58. Here again, significant importance is placed upon sight: our seeing God when we see Jesus (esp. 14:9).

Jesus prepares His disciples for the coming days, and in the near context of chapter 14, He tells them about His ascension to the

Father (cf. 13:3, 31-35). However, hearing about His imminent departure, the disciples grow troubled (14:1). Jesus comforts them by showing them that they can follow Him to the Father's glory because He is the "way" (v. 6).

Here, then, is Jesus, the "exegesis" (1:18) of the Father, the One who fully explains God's relationship to man through what He does and says.

Hence, in the statements before us, Jesus points out to His disciples that knowing, seeing, and understanding God come through what He (i.e. Jesus) has said and done.

Note, how Jesus always points out His oneness with His Father (Trinitarian relationship) by pointing at the "works" (miracles) he has done (cf. chapter 5) and the "words" which He has spoken (cf. chapter 8).

What we need to especially notice, however, is that when Jesus speaks of Himself as "the Way," He is identifying Himself as one of the Trinity.

Notice how Thomas' question sparks Jesus' comment (v. 5). Jesus responds that He is "the way, the truth and the life; no one comes through the Father, but through Me" (v. 6).

Hence, Jesus makes Himself out to be the exclusive means by which a person may come to know God.

This verse in particular expresses 3 important truths of Christology and also soteriology.

- 1) Christ is the exclusive means of relationship (way)
- 2) Christ is the exclusive means of revelation (truth)
- 3) Christ is the exclusive means of regeneration (life)

Moreover, Jesus goes on in v. 7 to make Himself out to be the exclusive revelation of knowledge about the Father.

Of course, when Jesus says that the disciples have seen the Father (v. 7), Philip immediately asks Jesus to show them the Father. To this, Jesus responds with the core of Trinitarian doctrine.

In v. 9-15, Christ explains His unique relationship with the Father.

First, Christ is one with God in His divine essence.

He says that "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (v. 9-10a).

Hence, seeing Christ is the same as seeing the Father.

Moreover, in v. 10a, Jesus tells Philips that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him.



This is the core of Trinitarian relationship. Jesus is one with the Father as to His essence, though distinct from Him as to His person. Hence, Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit are one God, one Being; They are nevertheless three distinct persons, and have distinctions in their personalities and functions. We ought properly to speak of a Triunity.

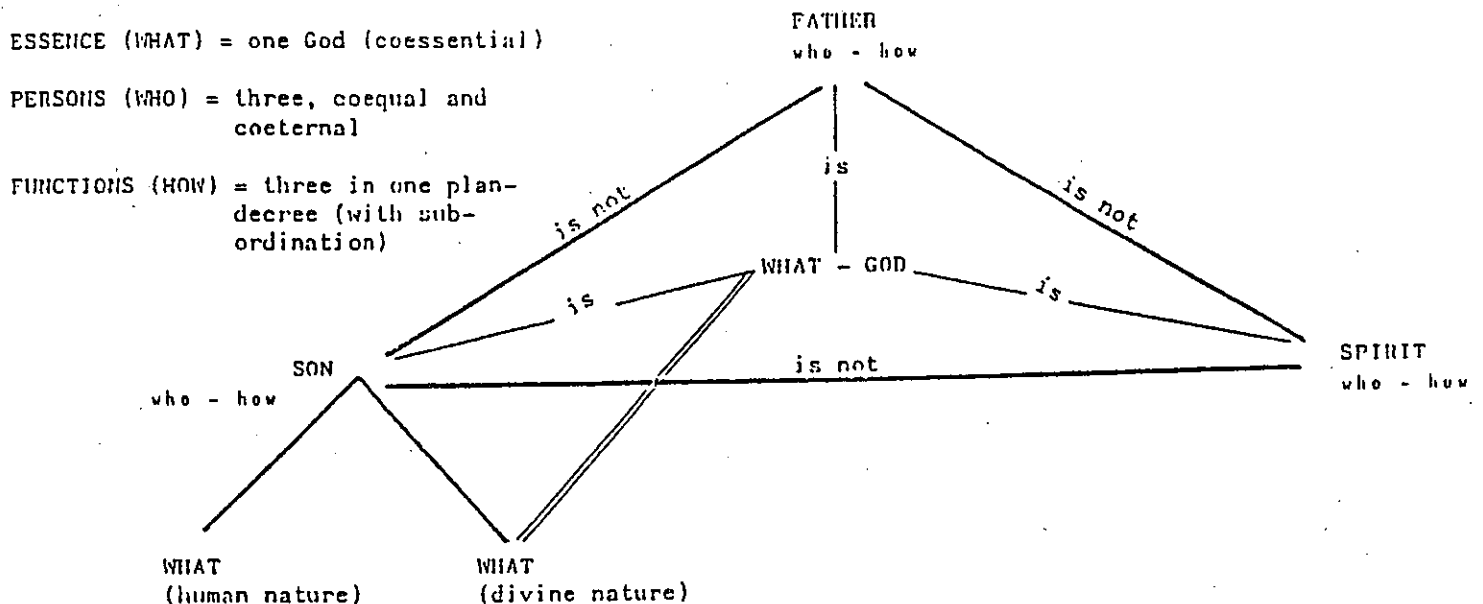
Christ goes on to point out His oneness with the Father in His words (v. 10b).

Finally, Christ points out His oneness with the Father in His works (v. 10c-11; cf. 10:38).

Then, in 14:12-14, Christ speaks of how He and His Father relate to the believer. Christ can provide comfort to the believer (14:1) because He is the exclusive Way to God, the Mediator between God and man. Moreover, He gives to man all of the riches which His Father intends to bestow upon His children. And this doesn't even include all that God has for us through the Holy Spirit!

Finally, Christ completes His discussion of His relationship to the Trinity by discussing His relationship to the Holy Spirit in 14:16-26.

#### TRINITARIAN RELATIONSHIPS



- ISSUES: 1) Define how our infinite God has been involved in creation-history, avoiding the extremes of deism and humanism
- 2) Are divine and human attributes different in degree or kind? How do they relate? How are they shared? How do they interact?

## CHRIST IS

## IN TITLE

- 1) λόγος. (1:1, 14, 18) = perfect (expressional) revelation  
Word (character of God, 1:14-17)
- 2) θεός (1:1, 18) = pure deity (light, life, glory)  
God

## IN ACTIVITY

- 1) Creator (1:2-3) = pre-eminent (divine) Sovereign
- 2) μονογενής (1:14, 18) = precious (unique) Son  
unique Son of God (3:16, 20:31)
- 3) ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωή Savior (14:6ff.) = powerful  
way truth life (divine) Savior

THEREFORE, BELIEVE IN HIM (20:30-31)

Conclusion: Points of Application

- 1) As the Word, Jesus is God's unique and personal communication to man (cf. Heb. 1:1-2).
- 2) It is of the essence of deity that God is life and light. Because Christ is God, He gives light and provides life (cf. 1:4-5, 14:6; 1 John 1:1-2; 5:11).
- 3) Because Christ is the God-man become flesh, He can and does mediate between God and man, and He is able and willing to impart life to all believers (cf. 6:36-40; 11:25-17; 14:6).
- 4) Faith should be placed in the Son because He is God and able to save. He alone can provide an eternal relationship with the Father as the unique provision of the Father (3:16-18; 1 John 5:12).
- 5) If you want to know and see God, look at Jesus. He is the Logos, Son, Messiah sent from the Father to explain and reveal Him (1:14, 18).

## A Final Thought From C. S. Lewis

"The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God."

"Light looked down and beheld darkness  
 Thither will I go said light  
Life looked down and beheld death  
 Thither will I go said Life  
Love looked down and beheld despair  
 Thither will I go said love  
 So came Light and shone truth

So came Life and conquered death  
 So came Love and gave hope  
 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"

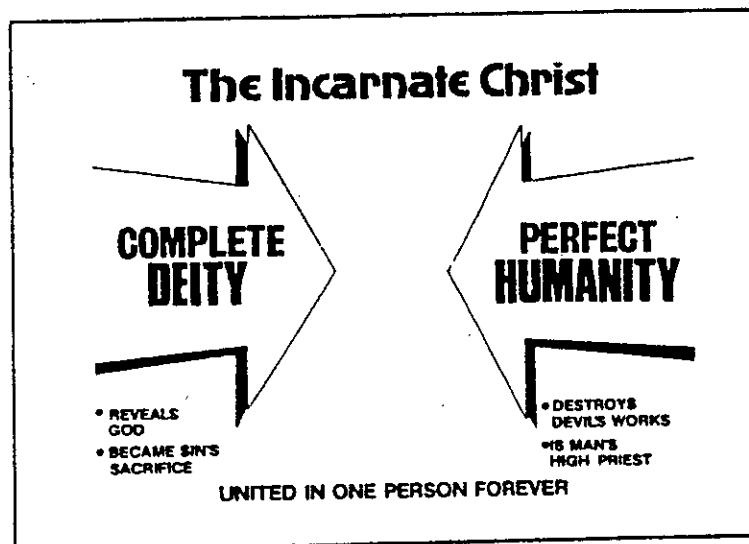
## CHRISTOLOGY

### Pre-Existence

John 1:1  
 John 17:5  
 Hebrews 1:2  
 Philippians 2:5-11  
 Colossians 1:15-16

### Angel of the Lord

Gen 16:7-14  
 Gen 22:11-18  
 Gen 31:11-13  
 Ex 3:2-5  
 Ex 14:19  
 Num 22:22-35  
 Judges 6:11-24  
 Judges 13:2-24  
 1 Kings 19:5-7  
 2 Kings 19:3-5  
 Zech 1:11



### Deity and Humanity

Luther = You should point to the whole man Jesus and say that is God

Barth = This man Jesus Christ does not only live through God and with God, He is himself God

Humanity - taken for granted in synoptics, but in other parts of NT it seems to be witnessed to in particular as if it might have been called into question or its significance neglected

### Synoptics

Mark - concentrates on humanity as much as any NT book  
 MT/LK - focus on birth stories as aspects of humanity including temptation

John - humanity similar to ours which could be seen

1:14; 4:6,7; 11:33-35

1 John 1:1-2; 4:2-3

### Acts

2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 22:8; 26:9

### Paul

Rom 1:3; 5:15; 9:5

Gal 4:4

2 Cor 8:9

Phil 2:6

1 Tim 2:5

## Deity of Christ: Major Parallel Passages

DIVINE RELATIONSHIP	COLOSSIANS 1-2	JOHN 1, 14	HEBREWS 1-2	PHILLIPIANS 2
Father	image 1:15, 19	Word 1:1, 14 radiant glory 1:14, 14:7	revelation 1:2	form 2:6
	first begotten 1:15, 18	only begotten 1:14, 18	first born 1:6	equal with God 2:6
	Son 1:13	Son 3:16	Son 1:2a, 5, 8	servant 2:7
DIVINE WORK				
Creation	(all) 1:16-18	(all) 1:1-3	(all) 1:2-3, 10	
Salvation	1:4-5, 10; 2:6	1:12-13	1:3; 2:10-11	2:6-8
Therefore, DIVINE NATURE	Theotetos 2:9(1:19)	Theos 1:1, 18	Theos 1:8	Theos 2:6
Exclusively	1:19, 2:9	1:18, 14:6	1:3	2:6
In Flesh	2:9	1:14	1:6, 9-10, 2:14-18	2:7-8

The Christ Hymn of Phil. 2:6-11

### Introduction

This is the 4th and final major Christological text of the N.T. (cf. Col. 1:15-23; 2:9-10; Heb. 1-2; John 1:1-18). Other text of the N.T. also contribute to our understanding of the person of Christ (e.g. Matt. 16:13-20; Rom. 1:3-4; Rev. 1:8, 13-18; 5:1-14; 19:11-16), but these four stand out as foundations upon which we might begin to construct a balanced and Biblical Christology.

This particular passage is especially noted for two important aspects of Christology:

- 1) The "kenosis" doctrine or "emptying of Christ."
- 2) The hypostatic union (uniting of two natures in one person).

Our study will reveal a number of similarities to the other three major text, and it will also provide some new insights as well (note the parallel chart). The preexistence of Christ will be affirmed for a fourth time, as will the incarnation (Heb. 1:1-2; John 1:14). A new element, however, will be "the exaltation of Christ" following His work on the Cross.

### Background Issues

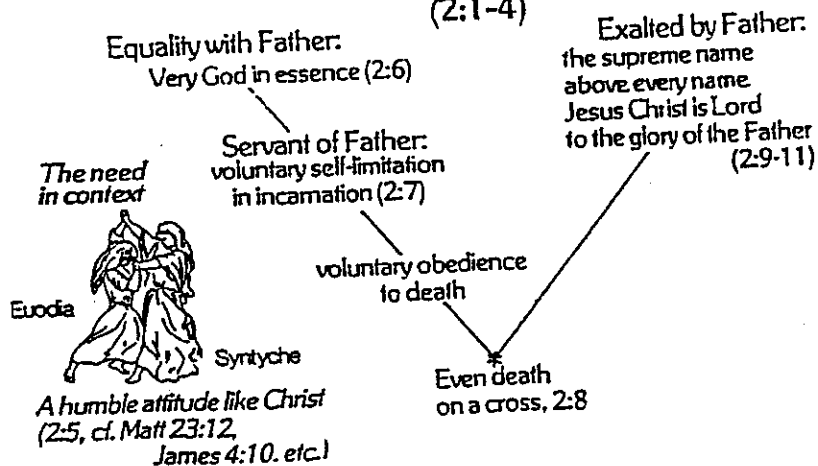
A number of debatable issues surface when this text is examined. Most scholars now agree that the passage is probably an early Christian hymn. At this point however, agreement ceases and debate begins. Four major issues are significant at this point:

- 1) Is the hymn Pauline or pre-Pauline?
- 2) Is the intent of the hymn: A) ethical B) metaphysical or C) soteriological?
- 3) Is the background of the hymn: A) Aramaic B) Hellenistic or C) Hebrew?
- 4) How many stanzas and in what arrangement are the stanzas?

It is not imperative that we have definitive answers to these questions. Our view of inspiration (inerrancy) after all, is concerned ultimately with the end product and not the means unto the text. For our purpose we tentatively answer the above questions as follows, noting that good scholarship may be called in support.

- 1) The author is Paul, though his adapting of an existing hymn for his epistolary purpose is certainly plausible.
- 2) The primary intent is ethical, though metaphysical and soteriological questions may legitimately be raised.
- 3) A Hebrew background, such as Is. 53, is most probable.
- 4) The hymn should be arranged in two stanzas as follows:  
A) stanza 1 vv. 6-8 Christ's humiliation  
B) stanza 2 vv. 9-11 Christ's exaltation

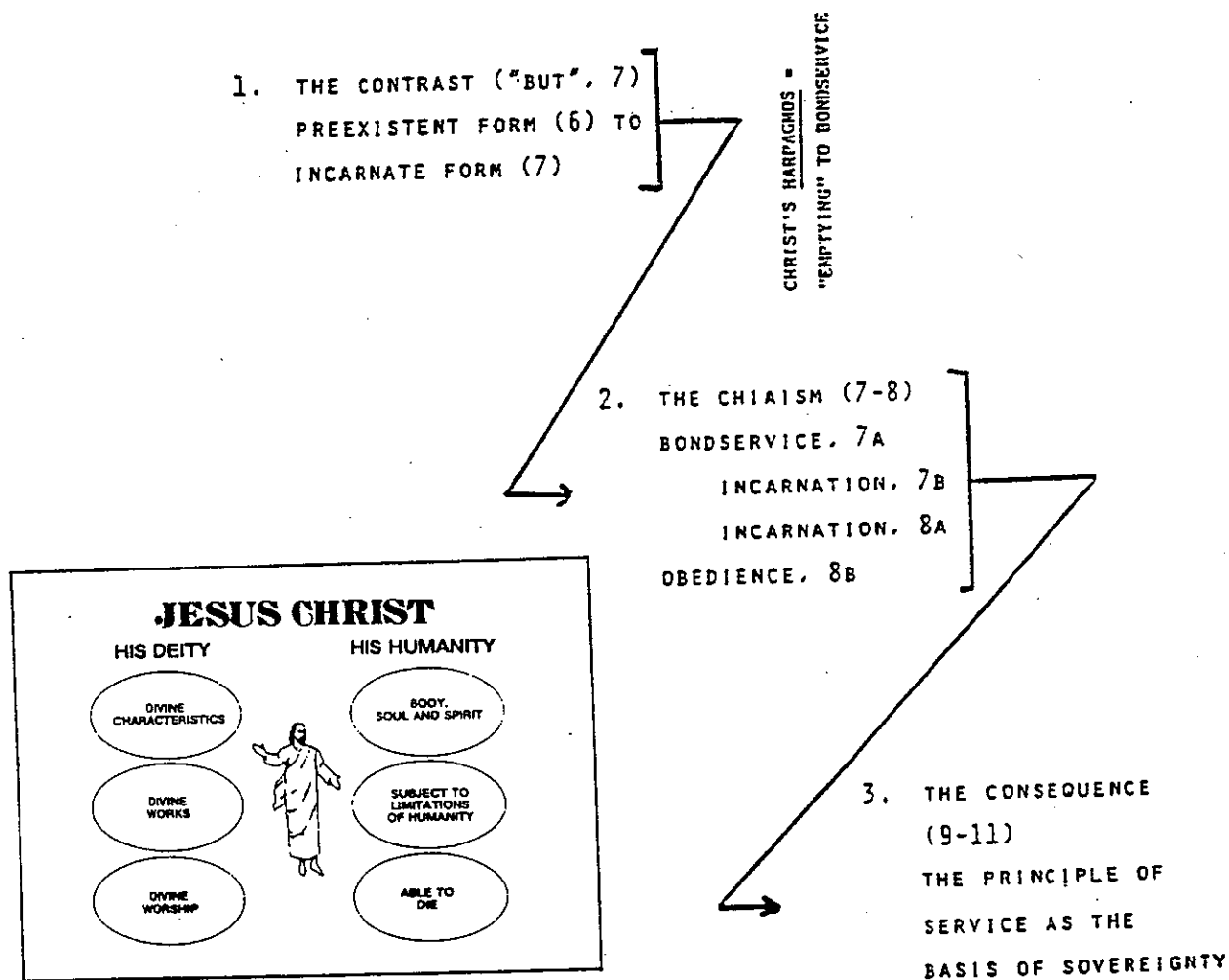
**Philippians 2:5-11;  
The Incarnation of Christ  
As the Supreme Example  
of True Humility and Greatness  
(2:1-4)**



That the hymn has an ethical context is clear from 2:1-5. Here Paul urges the Philippians to "have the mind of Christ" (v. 5, literally "think you," a pre. imp. of command). This command is preceded by a call to: 1) unity (v. 2), 2) humility (v. 3), and sensitivity (v. 4). Humility above all is identified as that character trait which exemplifies most

the mind of Christ. Interestingly, therefore, the hymn of 2:6-11 actually serves as an illustration (a divine one at that!) of the mind of Christ; the mind the believer should seek after and cultivate. Believers need to express genuine concern and compassion for one another, but this is not possible without adopting the same mind or attitude (disposition) which we discover in Christ. That Christ demonstrated such concern and compassion is the theme of the Christ hymn.

## PHILIPPIANS 2



### Exposition of 2:6-11

Incarnation comes from Latin: in + carnis = "in flesh." It means the state of being clothed or invested with flesh. Ryrie notes that theologically, "the incarnation" refers to "the hypostatic union of undiminished deity and perfect humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ forever (continuum from first advent)" (Bible Doctrine, p. 51). For Paul the starting point of the discussion is with "the preexistence of Christ."

2:6 "Who being in very nature God" (NIV)

"Being" is hyparchon, (Gk.), and emphasizes continued existence (Being is a pr. act part). Christ exist in the realm of eternity forever. He always is (cf. John 8:58). There never was a time when He was not. He is eternally existent. He therefore is God.

"Very nature" is morphe, (Gk.), translated "form" in the KJV. This word has been various understood. Opinion includes:

- 1) image of God (as 2nd Adam, cf. Gen 1:26-27).
- 2) glory of God (Johannine theme)
- 3) essence of God

The word itself can mean "form," "shape," "appearance," or "essence." Vincent says, "Morphe is that expression of being which is identified with the essential nature and character of God and which reveals it" (ICC, p. 57-58). The idea of an "outward display of an inner reality or substance" is set forth by Rienecker. He states further, "Here it refers to the outward display of the divine substance, i.e., divinity of the preexistent Christ in the display of His glory as being in the image of the Father" (Linguistic Keys Gk. N.T., vol. 2, p. 204). The point therefore is clear, Christ eternally exist in the very nature, essence, essential being of God. Whatever it is that makes God God, Christ is! Morphe denotes Christ as possessing, of being the permanent unchangeable pattern of deity. Jesus is God!

"did not consider equality with God something to be grasped" This phrase looks back to the expression "being in very nature God." Fiercely debated, the phrase may mean that his equal status and privileges with God were not that which He violently sought to seize or believed He must forcibly retain. Grasped is harpagmos (Gk.), and can mean: 1) robbing (active sense) or 2) a prize gained through robbery (pass. sense). The idea seems to be that being co-equal and co-eternal with God by the very nature of His being, equality with God was not something Christ had to forcibly strive for (as if He did not possess it) or assert (as if he could lose it). The comments of Bruce are appropriate in this context:

There is no question of Christ's trying to snatch or seize equality with God: that was already his because he always had the nature of God. Neither is there any question of his trying to retain it by force. The point is rather that he did not treat his equality with God as an excuse for self-assertion or self-aggrandizement; on the contrary, he treated it as an occasion for renouncing every advantage or privilege that might have accrued to him thereby, as an opportunity for self-improvement and unreserved self-sacrifice.

Several commentators have seen a contrast here with the story of Adam: Christ enjoyed true equality with God but refused to derive any advantage from it in becoming man, whereas Adam, made man in the image of God, snatched at a false and illusory equality; Christ achieved universal lordship through his renunciation, whereas Adam forfeited his lordship through his

"snatching." But it is not at all certain that this contrast was in the author's mind.

Whether the Christ/Adam contrast is in Paul's mind or not, a comparison of the two is certainly enlightening (note also the contrast of Christ with the attitude of Satan as typified in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28).

### ADAM AND CHRIST: Comparison and Contrast

ADAM	CHRIST
Made in the divine image.	Being the image and very essence of God.
Thought it a prize to be grasped at to be as God;	Thought it not a prize to be grasped at to be as God;
Aspired to a reputation.	Made himself of no reputation.
Spurned being God's servant.	Took upon Him the form of a servant (slave).
Seeking to be in the likeness of God;	And was made in the likeness of men;
And being found in fashion as a man (of dust, now doomed),	And being found in fashion as a man (Romans 8:3).
He exalted himself.	He humbled himself.
And became disobedient unto death.	And became obedient unto death.
He was condemned and disgraced.	God highly exalted Him and gave him the name and position of the Lord.

Christ therefore grasped not at sovereignty but service. Adam was humanity seeking deity. Christ was deity seeking humanity. His high and lofty position was not something He could not give up for the salvation of souls and the pleasure of the Father. He did not grasp, He gave. He did not climb, he condescended.

2:7-8 "but made Himself nothing" NIV (Better "He emptied

Himself"). The crucial word is kenoo (Gk.), meaning simply to empty. The import of this word would seem, to require both a contextual and theological interpretation, or an ethical and metaphysical perspective.

A) Contextual/ethical insights



Verses 7-8 basically express an understanding of Christ's "making himself of no reputation."

- 1) He took the form (morphe, Gk.) of a servant (doulos, Gk.)
- 2) He was made in the likeness (homoima, Gk.) and fashion (schema, Gk.) of a man.
- 3) He humbled himself (cf. vv. 2-4).
- 4) He became obedient unto death.
- 5) He died a cross-type of death (one of ultimate humiliation)

These verses express the idea that there was an emptying by addition. The Son did not surrender His deity, He added humanity. Further the type of humanity He added was not of a sovereign, but a servant/slave. He received not a crown, but a cross. Bruce says it well, "He yielded himself to the furthest limit of submission, to a death reserved for those who have no claim on society."

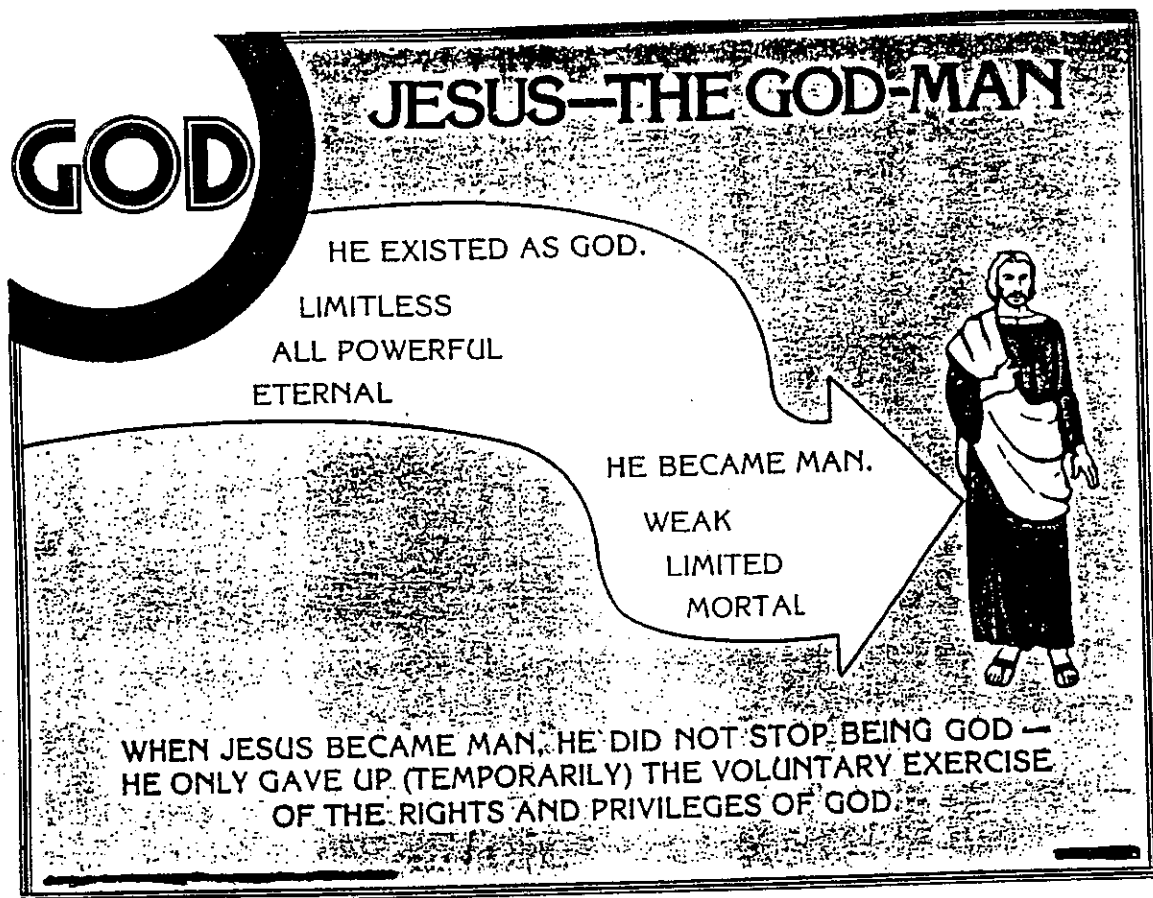
Practical Application: If our Lord so humbled himself, what type of attitude, self-evaluation should we cultivate?

#### B) Theological/metaphysical insights

Deity cannot cease to be deity, so any understanding of kenoo which would point in this direction must quickly be dismissed. Yet a real and genuine emptying took place. Verses 7-8, as well as John 1:14; 17:1-26 are helpful at this point. John 17:5 is especially significant, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (KJV). Jesus did not surrender His deity, but He did surrender His glory. He became in a sense God incognito. Laid aside willingly in humble obedience to the Father (v. 8) were:

- 1) the praises of heaven.
- 2) the position of heaven.
- 3) the prerogatives of heaven.

The wedding of deity and humanity was permanent. The emptying however only temporary. CHRIST TEMPORARILY LAID ASIDE THE FREE AND VOLUNTARY EXERCISE OF THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF DEITY! The emptying therefore involved self-limitation as well as ultimate humiliation. Christ partook of unglorified humanity. He voluntarily forfeited, for a time, the free use of His divine attributes, depending instead on His Father and the Holy Spirit. God however, Paul notes, does not leave the drama unresolved. Jesus in humiliation totally reverses the priorities and principles of this world system. His Father affirms His pleasure in His exaltation.



2:9-11

Man gave Jesus a Cross but God gave Him a Crown  
 Man gave Jesus a Grave but God gave Him back His Glory  
 Man gave Jesus Anguish but God gave Him Adoration  
 Man Expelled Jesus but God Exalted Jesus  
 Man gave Jesus Thorns but God gave Him a Throne

These verses affirm a three-fold exaltation of the Saviour.

- v. 9 An exalted position
- v. 10 An exalted adoration
- v. 11 An exalted confession

"Wherefore" (dio, Gk.) notes the consequent action of God (the Son humbles, not exalts Himself) in light of the Son's voluntary obedience and humiliation. "Highly exalted" means to exalt above and beyond, to super exalt. No doubt Paul has in mind here our Lord's resurrection, ascension and session in heaven. "Given him a name" may have reference to the name Yahweh, Lord or Jesus. The latter seems more likely, though merit lies in all three options. Indeed as the following chart shows, a multiplicity of names are ascribed to our Saviour, each highlighting or drawing special attention to some unique facet of His person and/or work.

# Jesus is Lord!

## Blessed be the names of the Lord!

<b>A</b> Adam, the Second 1 Cor. 15:45-47	<b>E</b> Elect Isa. 42:1	Lord, Your Redeemer Isa. 43:14
Advocate 1 John 2:1	Emmanuel Matt. 1:23 (RSV)	Love 1 John 4:8
Almighty Rev. 1:8	Eternal Life 1 John 5:20	
Alpha and Omega Rev. 21:6	Everlasting Father Isa. 9:6	<b>M</b> Man of Sorrows Isa. 53:3
Amen Rev. 3:14		Master Matt. 23:10
Ancient of Days Dan. 7:9	<b>F</b> Faithful and True Rev. 19:11	Messiah Dan. 9:25
Angel of His Presence Isa. 63:9	Faithful Witness Rev. 1:5	Mighty God Isa. 9:6
Angel, Mine Exd. 23:20-23	First Begotten Heb. 1:6	Mighty One of Jacob Isa. 60:16
Anointed Above His Fellow Psa. 45:7	First Born Psa. 89:27	Most Holy Dan. 9:24
Anointed, His Psa. 2:2	First Born Among Many Brethren Rom. 8:29	Most Mighty Psa. 45:3
Apostle of our Profession Heb. 3:1	First Fruits 1 Cor. 15:23	
Arm of the Lord Isa. 51:9-10	First and Last Rev. 22:13	<b>N</b> Nazarene Matt. 2:23
Author and Finisher of our Faith Heb. 12:2	Foundation Laid in Zion Isa. 28:16	<b>O</b> Only Wise God 1 Tim. 1:17
Author of Eternal Salvation Heb. 5:9		Our Passover 1 Cor. 5:7
<b>B</b> Begotten of God 1 John 5:18	<b>G</b> Glorious Lord Isa. 33:21	<b>P</b> Physician Luke 4:23
Beloved Eph. 1:6	God of Israel Isa. 45:15	Prince of Peace Isa. 9:6
Bishop of Souls 1 Peter 2:25	God with Us Matt. 1:23	Prince of the Kings of the Earth Rev. 1:5
Blessed and Only Potentate 1 Tim. 6:15	Great God Titus 2:13	Prophet Deut. 18:15-18
Branch, The Zech. 3:8	Great High Priest Heb. 4:14	Propitiation Rom. 3:25
Branch, A Righteous Jer. 23:5		<b>R</b> Rabbi John 1:49
Branch of Righteousness Jer. 33:15	<b>H</b> Head of the Body Col. 1:18	Redeemer Isa. 59:20
Branch of the Root of Jesse Isa. 11:1	Head over all Things Eph. 1:22	Resurrection John 11:25
Bread of Life John 6:35	Headstone of the Corner Psa. 118:22	Righteous Servant Isa. 53:11
Bright and Morning Star Rev. 22:16	Heir of all Things Heb. 1:2	Rock 1 Cor. 10:4
	Holy One of Israel Isa. 41:14	Root of Jesse Isa. 11:10
	Hope of Glory Col. 1:27	Rose of Sharon Song of Sol. 2:1
<b>C</b> Captain of the Lord's Host Josh. 5:15	<b>I</b> I Am John 8:58	<b>S</b> Saviour of the World 1 John 4:14
Carpenter's Son Matt. 13:55	Image of the Invisible God Col. 1:15	Seed of David John 7:42
Chief Cornerstone 1 Peter 2:6	Immanuel Isa. 7:14	Seed of the Woman Gen. 3:15
Chiefest Among Ten Thousand Song of Sol. 5:10	<b>J</b> Jesus Christ Our Lord Rom. 1:3	Shepherd, Good John 10:11
Christ, The John 1:41	Judge of Israel Micah 5:1	Son of God Rom. 1:4
Christ the Lord Luke 2:11		Son of Man Acts 7:56
Christ Jesus Our Lord Rom. 8:39	<b>K</b> King of Glory Psa. 24:7	Son of Mary Mark 6:3
Christ the Power of God 1 Cor. 1:24	King Zech. 9:9	Son of the Highest Luke 1:32
Counselor Isa. 9:6	King over all the Earth Zech. 14:9	Star out of Jacob Num. 24:17
Covenant of the People Isa. 42:6		Stone Matt. 21:42
	<b>L</b> Lamb of God John 1:29	Sun of Righteousness Mal. 4:2
<b>D</b> Dayspring Luke 1:78	Light of the World John 8:12	Sure Foundation Isa. 28:16
Daystar 2 Peter 1:19	Lily of the Valleys Song of Sol. 2:1	<b>T</b> Teacher John 3:2
Deliverer Rom. 11:26	Living Bread John 6:51	Truth John 14:6
Door, The John 10:9	Lord God Almighty Rev. 4:8	<b>U</b> Unspeakable Gift 2 Cor. 9:15
	Lord and Savior Jesus Christ 2 Peter 2:20	<b>V</b> Vine John 15:1
	Lord of All Acts 10:36	<b>W</b> Way John 14:6
	Lord Our Righteousness Jer. 23:6	Wonderful Isa. 9:6
		Word John 1:14
		Word of God Rev. 19:13

# That Beautiful Name

Jean Perry, 1866-1925, alt.

Robert J. Camp, 1871-1937

1 I know of a Name, A beau-ti-ful Name, That an-gels brought  
2 I know of a Name, A beau-ti-ful Name, That un-to a  
3 The One of that Name, My Sav-iour be-came, My Sav-iour of  
4 I love that blest Name, That won-der-ful Name, Made high-er than  
down to earth; They whis-pered it low, One night long a-go,  
Babe was given; The stars glit-tered bright Through-out that glad night,  
Cal-va-ry; My sins nailed Him there, My bur-dens He bare,  
all in heaven; 'Twas whis-pered, I know, In my heart long a-go.

To a maid-en of low-ly birth. And an-gels praised God in heaven. That beau-ti-ful Name, That He suf-fered all this for me. To Je-sus my life I've given.  
beau-ti-ful Name, From sin has power to free us! That beau-ti-ful  
Name, That won-der-ful Name, That match-less Name is Je-sus!

The bowing of adoration (v. 10) and the word of confession (v. 11) serve to emphasize the deity and universal Lordship of the Son, a reality which glorifies the Father. Is. 45:23 is echoed in v. 10. There Yahweh is in view, here the Son. It is no accident that Jesus has ascribed to Him that which is ascribed to the God of the O.T., for He also is God. That all will bow (v. 10) should be understood as a doxological and not a cosmological statement. Nothing in all of creation is outside of the Lordship and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Jesus (Christ) is Lord" is the quintessential Christian creed, and in that creed "Lord" is given the most august sense that it can bear. When Christians in later generations refused to say "Caesar is Lord," they refused because they knew that this was no mere courtesy title that Caesar claimed: it was a title that implied his right to receive divine honors, and in this sense they could give it to none but Jesus. To them there was "only one God, the Father, ... and ... only one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 8:6). In the Greek O.T. Gentile Christians read, Yahweh was denoted either by theos ("God") or (most often) by kyrios ("Lord"); they reserved theos regularly for God the Father and kyrios regularly for Jesus.

When divine honors are thus paid to the humiliated and exalted Jesus, the glory of God the Father is not diminished but enhanced. When the Son is honored, the Father is glorified; for none can bestow on the Son higher honors than the Father himself has bestowed."

F. F. Bruce

### Conclusion

- 1) In the incarnation/emptying of the Son, deity and humanity were perfectly and permanently joined: two natures in one person.
- 2) The kenosis consisted not in a subtraction of deity but an addition of humanity. In the incarnation the preexistent Christ laid aside His glory not His deity. He became God incognito.
- 3) Voluntary and willing humiliation for the benefit of others is the essence of the heart of God. As His subjects, we are constrained to live likewise.
- 4) Jesus is now the exalted and glorified God-man.  
 \* Spiritual greatness is found in servants not superstars.  
 \* Spiritual greatness is found in a humble posture not an honored position.  
 James 4:6, 10 - "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble (cf. Prov. 3:34) ... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up (cf. 1 Pet. 5:5b-6).

Thus we summarize as follows:

It was necessary that Christ should be both God and man. It was only as man that he could be a redeemer for humanity; and only as a sinless man that he could fittingly die for others. It was only as God that his life, ministry and redeeming death could have infinite value and satisfy the demands of God so as to deliver others from it. Christ has a human nature, but he is not a human person. The person of Christ is the God-man, the second person of the Trinity. In the incarnation, he did not change into a human person, nor adopt a human personage. He assumed a human nature in addition to his eternal divine nature. With the assumption of the human nature, he is not a divine person or a human person, but a divine-human person possessing all the essential qualities of both the human and divine nature. This is a mystery beyond full comprehension. Also, it is confessed that Jesus has both a divine and human consciousness as well as a human and divine will, yet clearly a unity of person. It is always the same person, Jesus Christ the Lord.

### **CHRIST AND ALEXANDER**

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;  
 One lived and died for self; one died for  
 you and me.  
 The Greek died on a throne; the Jew died  
 on a cross;  
 One's life a triumph seemed; the other but  
 a loss.  
 One led vast armies forth; the other walked  
 alone;  
 One shed a whole world's blood; the other  
 gave His own.  
 One won the world in life and lost it all  
 in death,  
 The other lost His life to win the whole  
 world's faith

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;  
 The Greek made all men slaves; the Jew  
 made all men free.  
 One built a throne on blood; the other  
 built on love;  
 The one was born of earth; the other from  
 above;  
 One won all this earth, to lose all earth  
 and Heaven;  
 The other gave up all, that all to Him be  
 given.  
 The Greek forever died; the Jew forever  
 lives;  
 He loses all who gets, and wins all things  
 who gives.

—Charles Ross Weede

## THE MIND OF CHRIST

### *Philippians 2:1-11*

#### I. We must cultivate the compassion of our Savior. (vs.1-4)

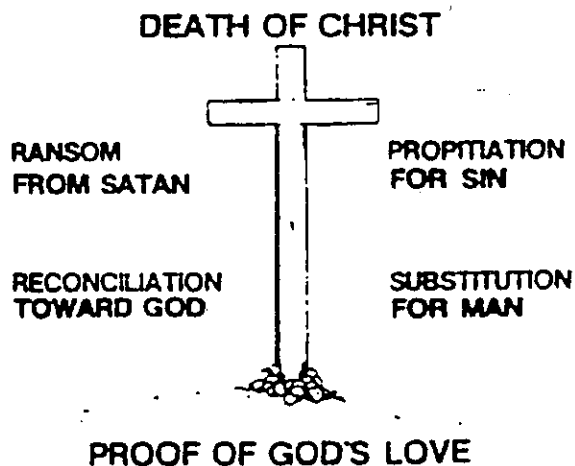
- A. There is the experience of divine blessings. (vs.1)
- B. There is the encouragement to divine behavior. (vs.2-4)
  - 1. Divine behavior is characterized by *unity*. (vs. 2)
  - 2. Divine behavior is characterized by *humility*. (vs.3)
  - 3. Divine behavior is characterized by *sensitivity*. (vs.4)

#### II. We should consider the humiliation of our Savior. (vs.5-8)

- A. He demonstrated humility in His *renunciation*. (vs.5-6)
- B. He demonstrated humility in His *incarnation*. (vs.7)
- C. He demonstrated humility in His *crucifixion*. (vs.8)

#### III. We should celebrate the exaltation of our Savior. (vs.9-11)

- A. He has received an exalted *position*. (vs.9)
- B. He is to receive exalted *adoration*. (vs.10)
- C. He will receive an exalted *confession*. (vs.11)



## HIS NAME IS WONDERFUL: JESUS MY LORD

John 13:1-17; Phil. 2:1-11

True greatness is discovered in being a servant. The greatest *person* who ever lived was Jesus. The greatest *servant* who ever lived was also Jesus. In John 13 we see an *illustration* of his willingness to be a servant; washing nasty, dirty (ugly!) feet--yuk! Yet wonderfully, He has washed our souls which were even dirtier and uglier. This is what Phil. 2:1-11 is all about. Here we see an *explanation* of our Lord's willingness to be a servant.

### I. Our Lord's compassion. Phil. 2:1-5

- 1) He has a heart of *unity*. vs.1-2
- 2) He has a heart of *humility*. vs.3
- 3) He has a heart of *sensitivity*. vs.4

\* Verse 5 is the key verse of the text. What does it mean to have "the mind of Christ?" In church, at school, at home, on the ball field, in our neighborhood,, with someone who is lost? (Let each one share their thoughts here).

### II. Our Lord's humiliation. Phil. 2:6-8

- 1) His *condescension*. vs.6
- 2) His *renunciation*. vs.7
- 3) His *crucifixion*. vs.8

\* If Jesus so humbled Himself, what should our attitude be? Attitude is the key to action.

### III. Our Lord's exaltation. Phil. 2:9-11

- 1) A great *position*. vs.9
- 2) A great *designation*. vs.10
- 3) A great *confession*. vs.11

### CONCLUSION:

James 4:6,10 teaches us that God resists the proud (think of the devil and Adam/Eve), but gives grace to the humble (Jesus). It's not easy to be humble, but it is essential if we would be like Jesus. His name is wonderful. He is our Lord. Let's be like Jesus.

*Dr. Danny Akin*  
Dean

### Kenosis.

Ph. 2:6, "Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

(7) but emptied (ekenosen) Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."

#### 1. The Kenosis Theory.

The name comes from the Greek verb kenoo which is translated "empty."

Definition. "The Divine Logos by His Incarnation divested Himself of His divine attributes of omniscience and omnipotence, so that in His incarnate life the Divine Person is revealed and solely revealed through a human consciousness." (J.M. Creed, in Mysterium Christi, ed. Bell and Deissmann, 1930, p. 133; cited in New Bible Dictionary, art. "Kenosis.")

In other words, God the Son laid aside the characteristics of divine nature when He took human nature.

This is a convenient theory for those who believe that on various issues they are right, and the teaching of Jesus is wrong. Among such issues would be the unity of Isaiah, hell, the second coming ... Jesus was mistaken, they say. That is no problem, for He was not omniscient.

#### 2. Objections to the Kenosis Theory.

You cannot have divine nature without divine attributes. The whole idea is a monstrosity.

This theory violates the immutability of the divine nature.

Even if it were possible for the Son to lay aside all divine attributes ("incarnation by divine suicide") then we are left with a Saviour who is not divine and therefore who cannot save!

The view leaves us with a Jesus whose teaching we can take or leave. He could be right, He could be wrong. There is no certain revelation of truth.

This theory has historically gone hand-in-hand with a liberalism that denies the miraculous element in the gospels.

#### 3. The Exegesis of Ph. 2:7.

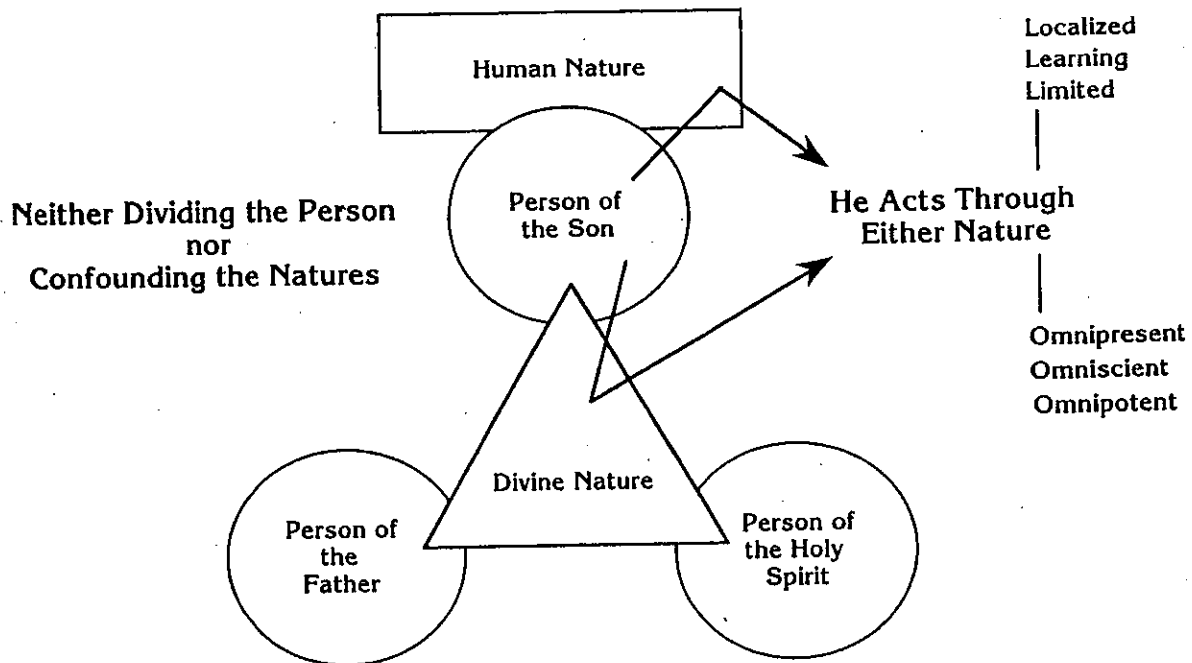
Linguistically the self-emptying is to be interpreted in the light of the words which immediately follow. ... His taking of the servant's form involved the necessary limitation of the glory which He laid aside that He might be born 'in the



likeness of men.' That glory of His pre-existent oneness with the Father (see Jn 17:5,24) was His because from all eternity He existed 'in the form of God' (Ph. 2:6). It was concealed in the 'form of a servant' which He took when He assumed our nature and appeared in our likeness; and with the acceptance of our humanity He took also His destiny as the Servant of the Lord who humbled Himself to the sacrifice of Himself at Calvary. The 'kenosis' then began in His Father's presence with His preincarnate choice to assume our nature; it led inevitably to the final obedience of the cross when He did, to the fullest extent, pour out His soul unto death ....  
 (New Bible Dictionary, art. "Kenosis.")

The phrase "He emptied Himself" is so strange to Greek that a Semitic original has been suggested. J. Jeremias suggests that the phrase reflects Is. 53:12, "He poured out His soul unto death." This of course makes it a reference to His death, not to the incarnation as such.

See the various writings of Ralph Martin on Ph. 2:5-11, especially his dissertation Carmen Christi.



### The Need for Two Natures.

If the Lord Jesus Christ was to save us, He had to be God and man at the same time. The classic on this is Cur Deus Homo? (Why Did God Become Man?) by Anselm (d. 1109).

#### 1. The Necessity for His Manhood.

The fundamental point is that if Christ was to act as the representative of men, He had Himself to be a man.

Any denial of His humanity comes from an evil spirit:

1 Jn 4:2, "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

(3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world."

Rom. 5:12-21 works out a parallel between Adam and Christ. Each is a representative man, whose actions affect his people. In brief, Paul says, "Adam got us in this mess; Christ got us out of it." He works it out as follows:

The Representative Man	Acts on behalf of	His Act	Principle at work	Result
Adam	His People	Sin	Law	Death Condemnation
Christ	His People	Obedience	Grace	Life Justification

The parallel between Adam and Christ is also worked out in 1 Cor. 15:

1 Cor. 15:21, "For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.

(22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."

1 Cor. 15:45, "So also it is written, 'The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ...

(47) The first man is from the earth, earthy, the second man is from heaven."

Another crucial passage on the need for the humanity of Christ is Heb. 2:5-18:

Heb. 2:9, "But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one.

(10) For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. ...

(14) Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;

(15) And might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. ...

(17) Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

(18) For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted."

With that we must link:

Heb. 4:15, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

(16) Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

The following points need to be made:

a. Since it is man that sinned, it must be a man that pays the penalty for sin.

b. The penalty of sin involves the suffering of both body and soul. It is only man who has both body and soul. Therefore only a man is qualified to bear the suffering for sin.

c. An essential element in saving us was to deal with the fact that as men if we wish to inherit eternal life there is a qualification which we must fulfil. That qualification is full obedience to the Law. Our disobedience disqualifies us.

Christ has obeyed in our place (Rom. 5:19). To obey the Law in place of men, He has to be a man.

d. His manhood had to be sinless manhood. If He had sinned, His death would be merely the punishment for His own sins. It would not help us at all.

e. In order to save us, our Lord had to be free not only from actual sin but also from original sin, in terms of both inherited corruption and also the imputation of Adam's sin. His virgin conception by the Holy Spirit, and consequent 'holiness' (Lk. 1:35), meets this need.

f. Part of the saving work of Christ is that he lives to make intercession for us. Because He was and is a man, He is able to understand us, sympathize with us, and help us.

g. If He is the mediator who brings men to God, he must have a foot in both camps. He must become man in order to bring man to God.

1 Tim. 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Jesus Christ."

## 2. The Necessity for His Deity.

a. To save us, Christ underwent the wrath of God for us, survived, brought us to share in His resurrection life, and is raising us to glory. If He had not been God, He would not have survived.

b. If He had been a mere man, to have taken on Himself the wrath which one man deserved would have been a task which lasted for all eternity.

c. If Christ had been merely a sinless man, He could have died in the place of just one sinner. A sacrifice of infinite value requires a person of infinite value.

d. A mediator between God and man must Himself be God if He is to bring men to God. Something less than God could not do it. A twenty-foot chasm cannot be bridged with an eighteen-foot ladder.

**Jesus Christ: The Wonderful God-man****Philippians 2, Hebrews 4:14-16****GOD**

1. Creator
2. Born of a virgin, untainted by sin
3. Baptizes with the Spirit
4. Gives rest to our souls
5. Dries away all our tears
6. Living water
7. Bread of Life
8. Good Shepherd
9. God of all comfort; one by whom all our needs will be supplied
10. Faithful and true
11. Advocate, Intercessor, Mediator
12. Every knee shall bow
13. Requires our services
14. High Priest
15. Was worshipped

**MAN**

1. Became part of creation
2. Born of a woman, untainted by sin
3. Baptized in a river by John
4. Got tired
5. Wept
6. Got thirsty
7. Got hungry
8. Sheep before His shears
9. Man of sorrow and grief; did not even have a place to lay His head
10. Falsely accused
11. Forsaken, despised, and rejected
12. His own received Him not
13. God's servant
14. Prayed
15. Went to the temple

- |                                      |                             |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 16. Unchanging                       | 16. Grew in wisdom, stature |
| 17. Alpha and Omega                  | 17. Lived 33 years          |
| 18. Great healer                     | 18. Knew intense pain       |
| 19. Atoned for the sins of the world | 19. Died with criminals     |
| 20. Rose again                       | 20. Died                    |
| 21. Righteous judge                  | 21. Judged unjustly         |
| 22. Will never leave or forsake us   | 22. Loneliness              |

### NAMES OF JESUS

Alpha and Omega, the Almighty, the Beginning and the End, Chief Cornerstone, First and the Last, Door of the Sheep, Firstborn of the Dead, God with us, Holy, Immanuel, I Am, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Life, Light of the World, Lamb of God, Lord of Glory, Master, Mediator, Only Begotten Son of God, our Passover, Prince of Peace, Resurrection and the Life, Son of God, Son of Man, Savior, Truth, the True Vine, The Word, The Way, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father.

If a theologian posits a subordination of order or of function and not of essence or nature, he is orthodox. His view is one of economic and not emphatic subordinationism. The emphatic is a subordination of essence and not merely of external function. This position is heretical because it posits a Godhead not only unequal in office but also unequal in nature. In the orthodox, or economic, Trinity, however, the Son occupies a secondary position not metaphysically, but only voluntarily in the *opera ad extra*. Such subordination is theologically acceptable . . .

Michael E. Bauman, "Milton, Subordination, and the Two-stage Logos," Westminster Theological Journal 48 (Spring 1986): 174.

## DEAR JOHN MACARTHUR:



### HOW CAN I PROVE FROM THE BIBLE THAT JESUS IS GOD?

There are six lines of biblical evidence that clearly demonstrate the deity of Christ:

1. **Divine names.** Several passages refer to Jesus as God. John 1:1 tells us "the Word [Jesus — cf. v. 14] was God." Greek grammar and the context rule out the translation "the Word was a god." Thomas addressed the risen Christ as "my Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Note that Jesus did not correct him, but acknowledged his faith (v. 29). Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 refer to Jesus as our God and Savior. The rules of Greek grammar indicate that both titles describe Jesus. That is especially clear in the 2 Peter 1 reference, since the same grammatical construction appears in verse 11, where it is obvious that the titles there (Lord and Savior) apply to Christ. Hebrews 1:8-9 records God the Father's testimony to Christ's deity: He twice addresses the Son as God. Finally, 1 John 5:20 refers to Jesus as "the true God and eternal life."

2. **Divine claims.** Jesus Himself claimed to be God. In John 10:30 He makes the startling statement, "I and the Father are one." The Greek word translated "one" is in the neuter gender, indicating Jesus is one in essence with the Father, not merely one in purpose. John 8:58 records an even more astonishing claim: Jesus applied to Himself the sacred name of God from Exodus 3:14, "I AM" (Heb., *YHWH*, "Yahweh" or "Jehovah"). If Jesus were merely claiming to be a pre-existent being, He would have said "Before Abraham was born, I was," instead of "I AM." Unlike many today, Jesus' opponents understood perfectly what He was claiming. That's why they attempted to stone Him for blasphemy (John 8:59; 10:31-33).

3. **Divine titles.** Many terms used in the Old Testament to refer to God are used in the New Testament to refer to Jesus. In Isaiah 6:5 Isaiah says, "My eyes have seen the King, the Lord [*YHWH*] of hosts." Yet the apostle John, referring to Isaiah's vision, says in John 12:41, "These things Isaiah said, because he saw His [Christ's — cf. v. 36] glory, and he spoke of Him." Other titles used of God in the Old Testa-

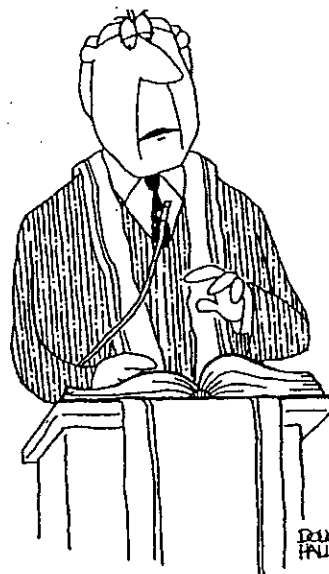
ment and of Jesus in the New include Holy One (Isa. 10:20; Acts 3:14), First and Last (Isa. 44:6; Rev. 22:13), Savior (Isa. 43:11; Titus 2:13), Pierced One (Zech. 12:10; John 19:37), and Lord of lords (Deut. 10:17; Rev. 17:14).

4. **Divine attributes.** Jesus possesses attributes unique to God: eternity (Micah 5:2; cf. Matt. 2:1-6), omnipresence (Matt. 18:20), omniscience (John 16:30), omnipotence (Heb. 1:3), and immutability (Heb. 13:8).

5. **Divine works.** Jesus did things that only God could do. The first sentence of the Bible tells us God created the universe, but John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16 speak of Jesus as the One who brought all things into being. He also sustains all things (Col. 1:17). Jesus, like the Father, has the authority to resurrect and judge men (John 5:21-29). He also has the authority to forgive sins — a right that, as His opponents pointed out, belongs to God alone (Mark 2:5-10).

6. **Divine worship.** Jesus affirmed the Old Testament truth that only God is to be worshiped (Matt. 4:10). Yet on several occasions He accepted others' worship of Him, obviously considering it appropriate (Matt. 14:33; 28:9, 17; John 9:38; 20:28-29). Unlike Peter (Acts 10:25-26), Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:11-18), or angels (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9), Jesus never refused the worship offered Him.

The evidence for Jesus' deity is conclusive. Those who deny it dishonor the Father (John 5:23), and face eternal tragedy (John 8:24).



"THIS IS ANOTHER OF THOSE DIFFICULT SAYINGS OF JESUS THAT I'D INTERPRET AS HUMOR."

## 8. Title Christology

Although the research in title Christology is diverse, scholars tend to fall into one of two camps: (1) The roots of title Christology are to be found in Jesus himself. Or (2) the titles were thus projected backwards into the mouth of Jesus or his disciples.

### EXAMPLES OF CHRISTOLOGY

A common assumption in current New Testament studies is that the Christian church spread out into three different cultural-geographic circles. The three circles are: (1) Palestinian Judaism; (2) hellenistic Judaism; and (3) hellenistic Gentiles. However this is

not accepted by all New Testament scholars, for the opponents of this three circle theory believe that no such neat Christological circles existed.

(1) Logos: Possible Hellenistic and Semitic origins. Cullmann argues that John 1:1-3 is a deliberate echo of Genesis 1:1, and therefore Logos must have a Semitic origin. Logos has the sense of a word endowed with reason. The name Logos was used as a bridge from the Christian faith to the Greco-Roman world.

(2) Son of Man: "Son of Man" is the most complex title in current New Testament studies. The data of the title in the New Testament: (1) it occurs eighty times; (2) the expression occurs in all the fundamental source documents of the Gospels, so it is not the preference of one writer; (3) it is a title Jesus may have applied to himself; (4) the title appears in no creed; (5) John's gospel has a special Son of Man theology; and (6) the title defies any systematic representation.

Marshall remarks that there is no interpretation of the title Son of Man without problems. (1) The title has its origin in Daniel 7:4 and other materials growing out of the Old Testament, such as 4 Ezra 13 and 1 Enoch 37-71. (2) The Gospels shed new light on the content of the title by speaking of the suffering, dying, and rising of the dead and of



the Son of Man as the foundation of the kingdom of God. They also speak of the Son of Man coming in glory. (3) It has the most support among the titles as the title Jesus might have used for himself. (4) It is an expression which raises Jesus above the rank of rabbi or prophet. And (5) it is apparently a transition title, as it is not found in the Epistles and the church creeds.

- (3) Messiah, Christ: The title Christos occurs 529 times in the New Testament, with 379 of them in Paul's writings. The title raises a number of issues: (1) What was the current rabbinic understanding of a Messiah? (2) Did Jesus apply the title to himself or one of his disciples, or is it a title the early church gave him? (3) Why did the title change from that of a name for a coming person to that of a proper name? (4) Is there any claim by Jesus to the title from the accusation he bore with his cross? And (5) what effect did the resurrection have on this title?

From the discussions of this title we can summarize.

- (1) The root of the title is the Old Testament and more specifically the messianic materials. Hence there is both continuity and discontinuity in the picture of Jesus as the Messiah with Old Testament materials about the Messiah.
- (2) We believe that the term of Messiah would not have been given to Jesus unless there was a basis for it in Jesus' own lifetime.
- (3) There is a good measure of truth in Pannenberg's assertion that the resurrection of Christ both clarifies and certifies the titles of Jesus. The resurrection of Christ seems to have firmed up the title of Christ.
- (4) The meaning of the word Christ as an office or an expected individual becomes a proper name for Jesus in the New Testament.

- (4) Lord:
- (1) The Greek word for lord, kurios, has a great number of meanings similar to the English word lord.
  - (2) In I Cor. 16:22 the Aramaic word for lord is used (mari) in connection with Christ. This means that Jesus was called Lord very early in the history of the church.
  - (3) In common with other titles there could have been a pre-resurrection meaning of the term and a post-resurrection one.

- (4) From confession and worship as Lord the name then borders on a confession of deity, or actually becomes such a confession. Jesus Christ was called Lord in solemn confession, and Christian worship began to crystalize around the word Lord as applied to Jesus.

- (5) Son of God: Marshall has presented the options. (1) Jesus used the title himself and claimed that he was the Son of God sent into this world for human salvation. (2) It is a title imported from hellenistic thought and signifies the myth of the divine man. (3) Behind the title Son of God was a more primitive title, which in turn was changed to the Son of God; or else it was a term which expressed Jesus' special relationship to God. (4) In the process of the development of the early church's Christology, the title Son of God emerges as one of the titles that was thought fit for Jesus.

From the standpoint of historic Christology the following observations may be made about the title Son of God:

(1) The title is so honorific and important that it is debatable if any church scribe would have given this title to Jesus without any claim to the title stemming from Jesus.

(2) The title is a messianic title similar to Son of Man. It has its historical roots in the baptism of Jesus.

(3) Although previous writers interpreted the title to mean Jesus' special sense of sonship or filial piety, that interpretation is too mild. It is clear when the expression Son is used the title means a special Son of the Father.

(4) Just as the resurrection heightens the meaning of most titles it heightens this one. If Christ's special sonship was obscure before the resurrection, it is clarified by the resurrection.

(5) The title comes into its fullest meaning in John's gospel where in so many instances the expression the Son is used rather than the Son of God.

(6) According to Kasper, the confession of Jesus as the Son of God is the hallmark confession of the Christian church.

## CHRISTOLOGICAL HYMNS

Delling says that there are no complete hymns but fragments suggesting that they were part of a hymn. The data about Christological hymns are not firm.

The "official" list of hymns treated by Sanders is: Philippians 2:6-11, Colossians 1:15-20, Ephesians 2:14-16, I Tim 3:16, I Peter 3: 18-22, Hebrews 1:13, and the Prologue of John. Certain things stand out in reviewing these hymns: (1) In that hymns are confessional and liturgical they reveal the kind of Christological affirmations made by the early church. (2) Because the hymns are earlier than their citation in the New Testament they are then more primitive than the New Testament. (3) The hymns cannot be arranged in any order of theological progression. They represent "Christological explosions" in the early church. (4) The rich Christological content of the hymns suggest that very early in the history of the church, the church in praise, worship, and liturgy had a very high Christology.

## CHRISTOLOGICAL CONFESSIONS

Some confessions are the essence of brevity being directed toward a very specific goal such as "Jesus is Lord" or "Jesus is the Christ". Other confessions speak of the redemptive activity of Christ. Others are binarian.

- (1) From its very beginning the church was a confessional community.
- (2) The Trinitarian confessions of the later church are already both directly and indirectly in the New Testament.
- (3) These confessions reveal that to be a Christian meant (among other things) one must confess his faith. Confessions grow out of the baptism even though later on they become more church confession than baptismal confession.

# "Title Christology," the Concept of "Messiah" and O. T. Prophecies of His Coming

## I. Title Christology

The names or titles ascribed to Jesus in scripture are various, colorful and descriptive. Jesus Christ, who was eternally the second person of the Trinity sharing all the divine attributes, became fully man without sin in order to fulfill his redemptive mission. Many of the titles ascribed to the Lord highlight or emphasize certain aspects of His person and work. Some of the more important title, and a brief description, are the following:

- 1) Messiah (Christos, Gk.) - As Messiah, Jesus is "the anointed one" and is the fulfillment of the long awaited hope of a deliverer in a political sense. The fact that it could be understood with political overtones explains why Jesus did not use the term himself.

- It designates Him as God's agent through whom God would break through into the present for the salvation of his people.

- Mt. 11:3 ff; Is. 35:5-6; 2 Sam. 7:12 ff

- 2) Son of David - Ps. 110:1; Mt. genealogy (Matt. 1:1-25); Acts 13:22; Rom. 1:3

- This emphasizes kingship motif, and development and fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.

- 3) Servant - Is. 52:13-53:12; Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Pet. 2:21-25

The servant theme speaks to many aspects of Christology, being based on Isaiah 53; and is of crucial importance in redefining the meaning of Messiah.

- 4) Prophet/Teacher - Dt. 18:15; Mt. 16; Acts 3:22

- This emphasizes the preaching ministry of Jesus as the voice of God.

- 5) Son of Man - used almost exclusively by Jesus - reflects back to Dan. 7 and is multi-faceted in that it signifies:

- A) his authority - Mk. 2:10
- B) his humiliation - Mt. 8:10
- C) his glorification - Mk. 13:26
- D) his salvific work - Lk. 19:10
- E) his pre-existence - Jn. 6:62

Jesus thought of Himself in terms of a heavenly Messiah fulfilling on earth a ministry on behalf of humanity which would culminate in ~~one~~ of final glory. It is this title he uses and not Messiah to announce his Messianic office with all of its spiritual meaning, devoid of political overtones.

- 6) Lord - used for the covenant name YHWH in LXX; also a title of respect in a general sense.

- A) gospels often used as a title of respect
- B) significance is in early confessional formulas vitally related to his resurrection and exaltation (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11; 2 Cor. 4:5)

It signifies:

- 1) relation to YHWH = deity
- 2) functions assigned to God's sovereignty given to Christ
- 3) related to his resurrection and his triumph over death
- 4) he is Lord and Master and his followers are willing bond-servants.

- 7) Son of God - seldom used by Jesus himself (Mk 12:6), but is a title given to him at his:

birth - Lk. 1:35

baptism and transfiguration - Mk. 1:11, 9:7

Confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi - Mt. 16:16

demons - Mk. 5:7

signifies:

- A) Sonship = Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14; Mt. 2:15
  - Jesus assumes the name of one in whom the true destiny of Israel is to be fulfilled
- B) Consciousness with Father - Mt. 11:27; Jn. 5:19-23
- C) Equal with Father - John 10:30

- 8) Word/Logos - Jn. 1:1, 14; 1 Jn. 1:1-2 (Col. 1; Heb. 1)

Background - Hebrew/O.T.

- A) strongly affirms his pre-existence
- B) agent of God's creative activity
- C) relationship to men (foreign to Greek thought)

- 9) Last Adam - Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:22; 45-57 (a Pauline concept)

- A) solidarity of Adam with race and Christ with his people
- B) through one sin came condemnation of all; through one grace provided for all
- C) one man's disobedience contrasted with one's obedience
- D) what Adam lost, Christ regained  
what Adam failed to do, Christ accomplished

E) Adam shows humanity in its fallenness  
Christ shows humanity in its perfection

F) Adam = death  
Christ = life

G) Adam - living being  
Christ - life-giving spirit

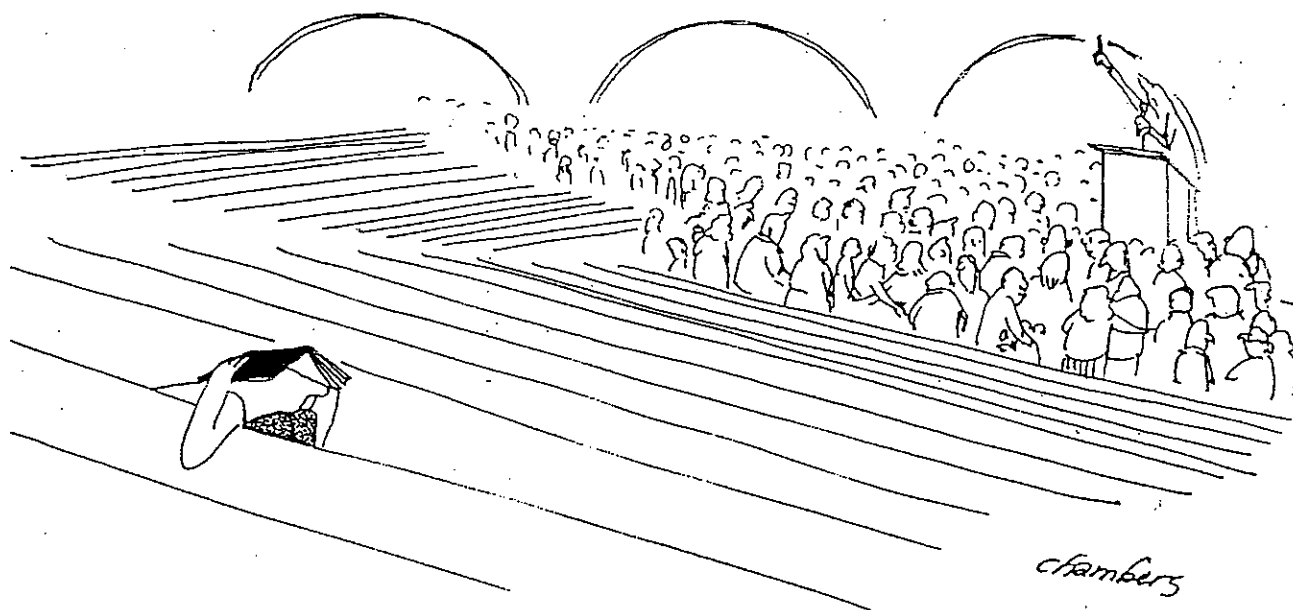
H) Adam - man of dust  
Christ - man from heaven

10) God - 1st century Christians did not hesitate to ascribe deity to him

Jn. 20:28; Rom. 9:5; 2 Thess. 1:12; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:5-8

The titles affirm his uniqueness and a high view of Jesus. The total impression is that Jesus was recognized in his person as God and man.

Emil Brunner (II, 91) Only when we understand him as absolute Lord to whom full divine sovereignty belongs does Easter as victory and Good Friday as saving fact become intelligible. Only when we know Jesus as heavenly Lord do we know ourselves to be sharers in the Messianic kingdom as people of the new Messianic era.




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As we sing the 314th verse of "Just as I Am," isn't there *ONE MORE* who will come?

# Who is He: The Predicted One

112

## **1. Seed of Woman**

Genesis 3:15

## **2. Seed of Abraham**

Genesis 12:1-3

## **3. Tribe of Judah**

Genesis 49:10

## **4. House of David**

II Samuel 7:14

## **5. Born of a Virgin**

Isaiah 7:14

## **6. Born in Bethlehem**

Micah 5:2

## **7. Prophet**

Deuteronomy 18:15

## **8. Priest**

Psalms 110

## **9. King**

II Samuel 7:14 ff

Psalms 2

Isaiah 9:6

Zechariah 9:9

## **10. Suffering Servant**

Psalms 22

Isaiah 53

## **11. Son of Man**

Daniel 7:13-14



### OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES OF CHRIST

Topic	Prophecy	Passage
Christ's Lineage	Virgin birth Lineage of Shem Lineage of Abraham Lineage of Isaac Lineage of Jacob Lineage of Judah Lineage of David	Genesis 3:15 Genesis 9:26 Genesis 12:2 Genesis 17:19 Genesis 25:23; 28:13 Genesis 49:10 2 Samuel 7:12-16
Christ's Birth	Manner of birth Place of birth	Isaiah 7:14 Micah 5:2
Christ's Life	His forerunner His mission His ministry His teaching His presentation His rejection	Isaiah 40:3 Isaiah 61:1 Isaiah 53:4 Psalm 78:2 Zechariah 9:9 Psalm 118:22
Christ's Death	A painful death A violent death	Psalm 22 Isaiah 52:53
Christ's Victory	His resurrection His ascension	Psalm 16:10 Psalm 68:18
Christ's Reign	As sovereign king From exalted Jerusalem With governmental authority In peaceful justice For joyful restoration	Psalm 2 Psalm 24 Isaiah 9:6-7 Isaiah 11 Isaiah 35:1-10

### FULFILLED PROPHECIES CONCERNING CHRIST

Topic	Old Testament Prophecy	New Testament Fulfillment
Line of Abraham	Genesis 12:2	Matthew 1:1; Galatians 3:16
Line of Judah	Genesis 49:10	Matthew 1:2
Line of David	2 Samuel 7:12-16	Matthew 1:1
Virgin birth	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23
Birthplace: Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:6
Forerunner: John	Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1	Matthew 3:3
King	Numbers 24:17; Psalm 2:6	Matthew 21:5
Prophet	Deuteronomy 18:15-18	Acts 3:22-23
Priest	Psalm 110:4	Hebrews 5:6-10
Bore world's sins	Psalm 22:1	Matthew 27:46
Ridiculed	Psalm 22:7, 8	Matthew 27:39, 43
Hands and feet pierced	Psalm 22:16	John 20:25
No bones broken	Psalm 22:17	John 19:33-36
Soldiers gambled	Psalm 22:18	John 19:24
Christ's prayer	Psalm 22:24	Matthew 26:39; Hebrews 5:7
Disfigured	Isaiah 52:14	John 19:1
Scourging and death	Isaiah 53:5	John 19:1, 18
Resurrection	Psalm 16:10; 22:22	Matthew 28:6; Acts 2:27-28
Ascension	Psalm 68:18	Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11



## The Cross of Christ: Foretold 1000 Years in Advance

### Psalm 22

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#### *I. David's prayer foreshadowed the suffering of the cross. 22:1-18*

- 1) The suffering was spiritual in nature. 22:1-5*
- 2) The suffering was physical in nature. 22:6-18*
  - a) He experienced verbal scorn. 22:6-8*
  - b) He experienced personal solitude. 22:9-11*
  - c) He experienced bodily suffering. 22:12-16*
  - d) He experienced personal shame. 22:17*
  - 3) He experienced material separation. 22:18*

#### *II. David's petition foreshadowed the salvation of the cross. 22:19-21*

- 1) It was in God alone that he trusted. 22:19-20*
- 2) It was through God alone that He triumphed. 22:21*

#### *III. David's praise foreshadowed the splendor of the cross. 22:22-31*

- 1) The praise is personal because of God's saving resurrection. 22:22-24*
- 2) The praise is congregational because of God's satisfying reward. 22:25-26*
- 3) The praise is universal because of God's sovereign reign. 22:27-31*

**Jesus, Our Savior: The Servant of the Lord**  
**Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

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**I. Isaiah speaks of the Servant's Exaltation. 52:13-15**

- 1) *He is exalted because of His success. 52:13*
- 2) *He is exalted because of His suffering 52:14*
- 3) *He is exalted because of His salvation. 52:15*

**II. Isaiah speaks of the Servant's Rejection. 53:1-3**

- 1) *The proclamation about the Servant was a cause of rejection. 53:1*
- 2) *The incarnation of the Servant was a cause of rejection. 53:2*
- 3) *The reception given the Servant was a cause of rejection. 53:3*

**III. Isaiah speaks of the Servant's Passion. 53:4-6**

- 1) *There was a perverse evaluation of the Servant's mission. 53:4*
- 2) *There is penal substitution in the Servant's passion. 53:5*
- 3) *There is a pointed illustration of the Servant's redemption. 53:6*

**IV. Isaiah speaks of the Servant's Submission. 53:7-9**

- 1) *He was submissive in His silence. 53:7*
- 2) *He was submissive in His suffering. 53:8*
- 3) *He was submissive in His shame. 53:9*

**V. Isaiah speaks of the Servant's Vindication. 53:10-12**

- 1) *He is vindicated by a word of revelation. 53:10*
- 2) *He is vindicated by the wondrous resurrection. 53:11*
- 3) *He is vindicated by His worthy reward. 53:12*

## The Virgin Birth

### Introduction

The virgin birth is critical to our understanding of the hypostatic union of Christ. For, it teaches that God became man, the Word became flesh, as the Holy Spirit and Mary participated in the event. Hence, we find Christ as one person having two natures, a human and a divine. That this actually happened demonstrates that there is no contradiction in the idea that God can become man. God in His essence is certainly beyond human apprehension, and yet the incarnation/virgin birth demonstrates that He is not so transcendent as to be "wholly other" and hence utterly unknowable.

Furthermore, because the virgin birth is presented in Scripture and accepted by orthodoxy as a bona fide miracle, it becomes something of a "test case" of one's belief in supernaturalism. Those who deny the virgin birth thereby deny God's supernatural act of incarnation. Moreover, a denial of the virgin birth also is a repudiation of the clear teaching of Scripture.

Bill McRae notes,

"There are many who openly deny this doctrine. The attacks began early in the second century when, in the Talmud, the story was given that Jesus was actually the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier by the name of Pandira. This story, concocted by the Jews, was used by the pagan philosopher Celsus in his attack against Christianity. The French infidel Voltaire, the German evolutionist Haeckel and Tolstoi, a Russian writer, propagated the same story. Right down to our present age there are such great scholars as Emil Bruner, Rudolph Bultmann, Paul Tillich, Nels Ferre, John Baillie and many others who openly deny the virgin birth.

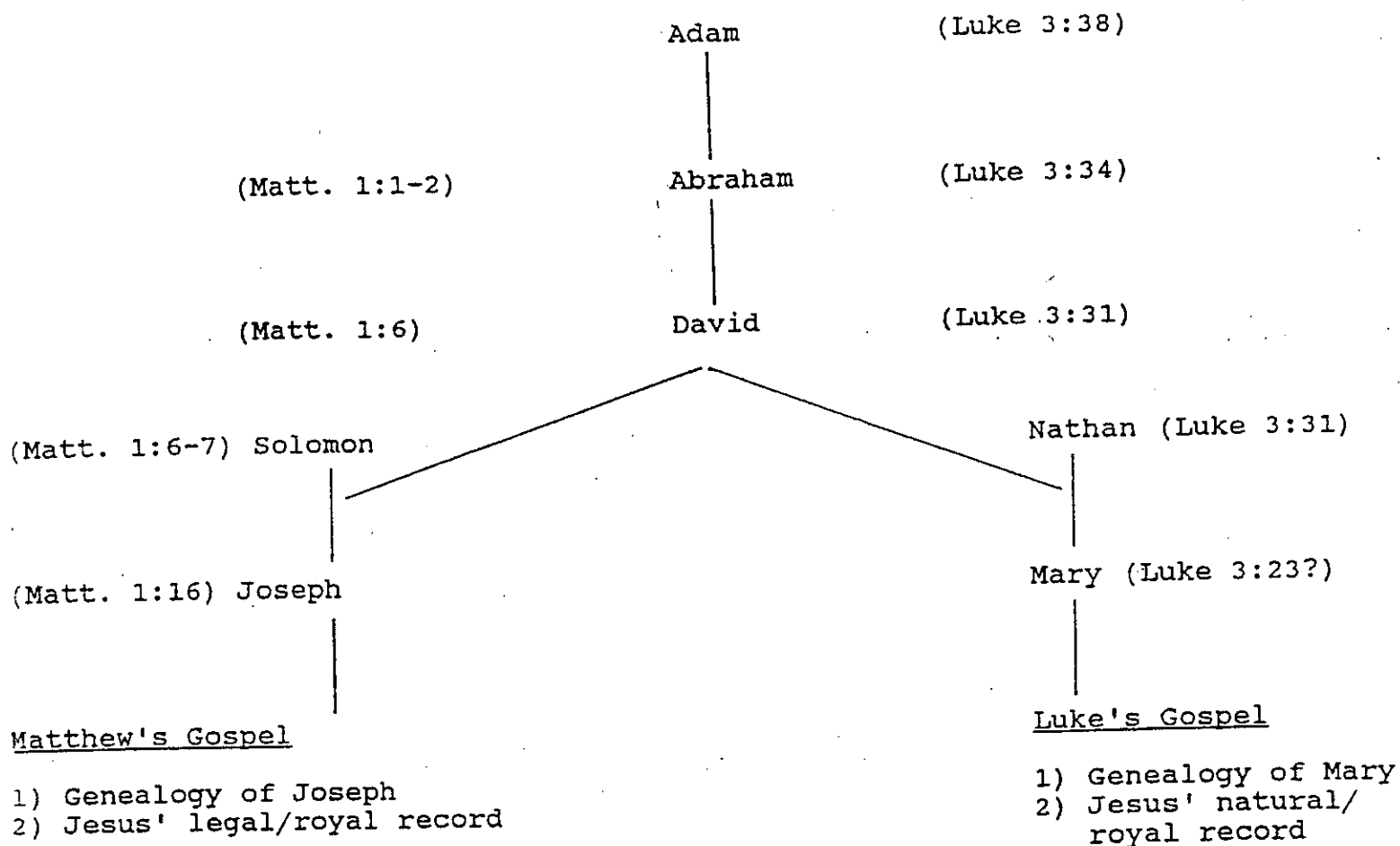
In a survey published in Christianity Today (Sept. 11, 1970), it was determined that the virgin birth is denied by 60% of the Methodists, 49% of the Presbyterians, 44% of the Episcopalians and 34% of the American Baptists and 19% of the American Lutherans. The fact is that, although many of us will bow before the manger and sing the Christmas carols, in Christendom today there is a wholesale selling out of the method of Christmas - the virgin birth."

Key Text: Three crucial texts (possibly four) address the issue of the Virgin Birth:

- 1) Is. 7:14 ff (cf. also 9:6-7, 11:1 ff)
  - 2) Matt. 1:18-25
  - 3) Luke 1:26-38
  - \* 4) Gen. 3:15
- \*\*Note possible allusions also in Rom. 1:3; Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:6

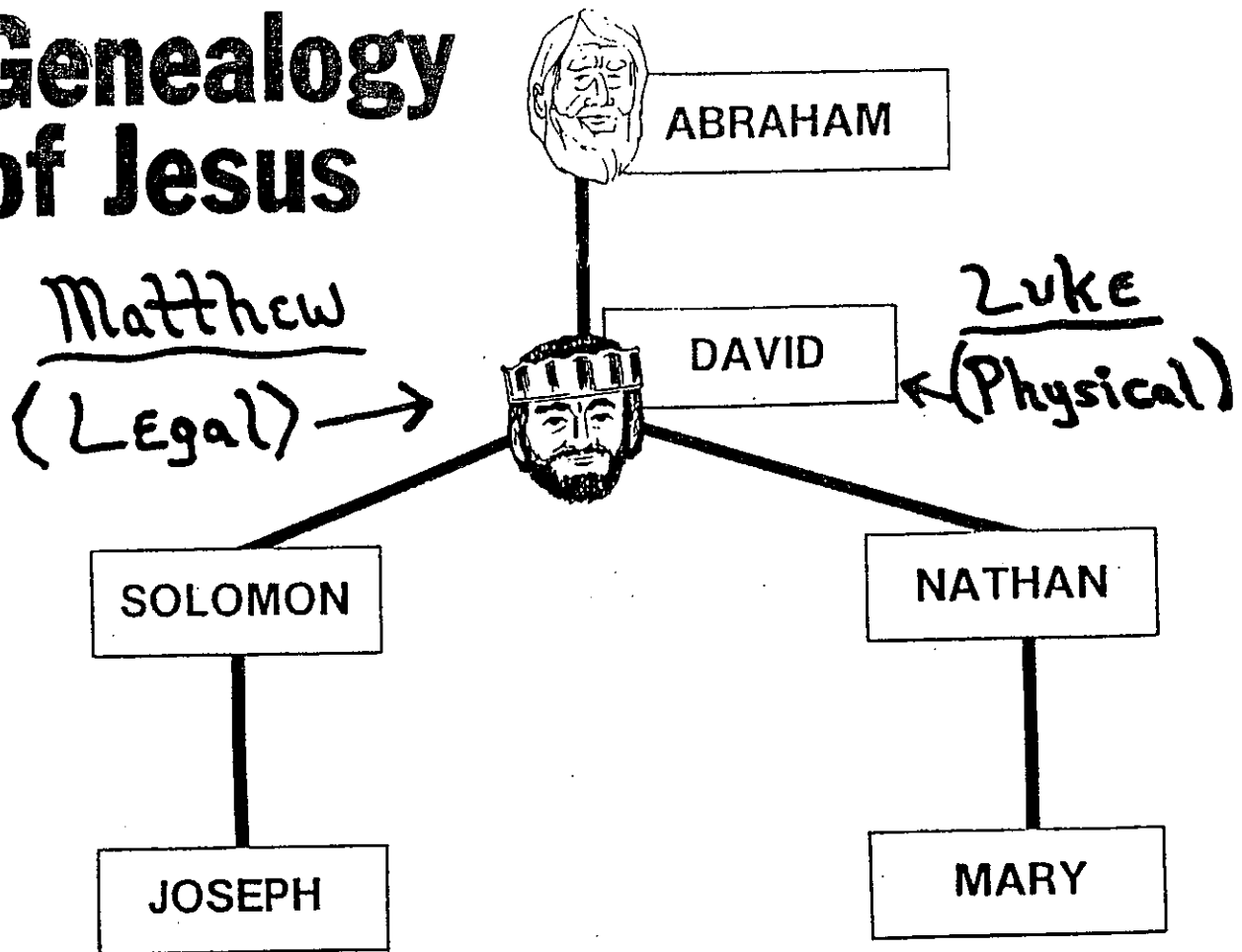
These text and their interrelatedness is shown in the following diagram. Matthew examines the birth from Joseph's perspective (and also provides a legal genealogy in 1:1-17). Luke looks at the event from Mary's perspective (and provides a natural genealogy in 3:23-38).

# GENEALOGY OF JESUS



"Harry, some people out here want to know if they can have a room."

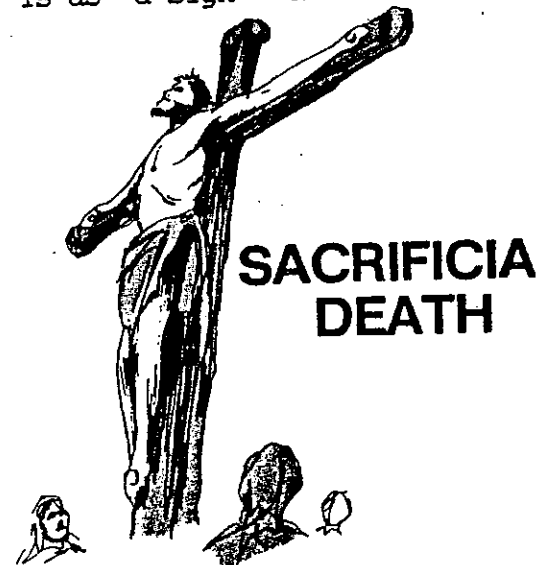
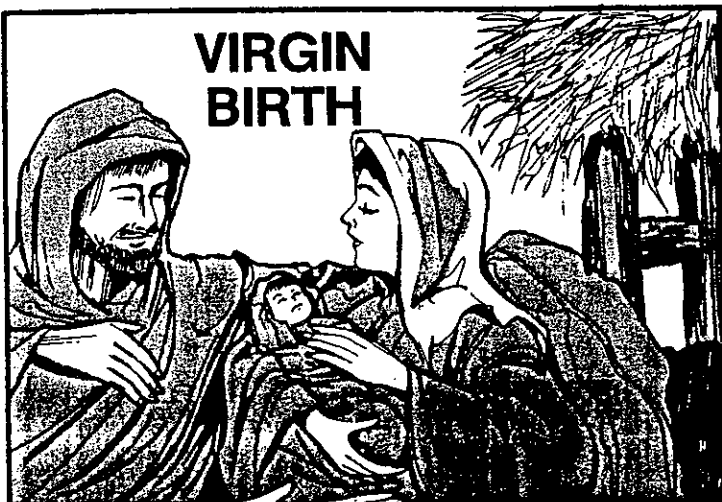
# Genealogy of Jesus



Both Gospel accounts further emphasize certain aspects of Joseph and Mary which indicate their innocence, righteousness and purity.

## A) Matthew teaches us:

- 1) Joseph was in no way involved in the conception of Jesus (v. 25).
- 2) He did have normal marital relations with her afterwards (v. 25).
- 3) He was responsible for the naming of the child (v. 25).
- 4) All of this was a fulfillment of the Virgin Birth prophecy of Is. 7:14 (vv. 22-23). The name Immanuel ("God with us") is also significant at this point, serving even as an allusion to the hypostatic union.
- 5) The essential import of the virgin conception is as "a sign" that God is going to again act (cf. Is. 7:14).



# Supernatural, Virginal Conception and Birth of Christ

<i>pre-existent person</i>	<b>Matthew 1:16-25</b>	<i>theanthropic person</i>	<b>Luke 1:26-38</b>
Isaiah 7:14	_____Joseph_____	_____Mary_____	
	Betrothed and excluded (ἐξ ἥς), 1:18	Betrothal relationship, 1:27, 2:5	
	Virginal conception (ἐν Holy Spirit), 1:18, 20	Virginal conception, 1:35	
	His righteousness, 1:19	Her righteousness, 1:34	
	παρθένος and Immanuel, 1:23	παρθένος, 1:27	
	Virginal birth, 1:25	Supernaturalness re-emphasized, 1:37-41	

B) Luke emphasizes for us:

- 1) That Mary is a virgin (*parthenos*). Matthew also has this emphasis.
- 2) That the entire complex of events was a surprise (1:29-30).
- 3) The divine agency of the Holy Spirit. This point is again not ignored in Matthew, but is given greater attention in Luke (1:35). Lanier Burns notes at this point:

In v. 35, Luke shows that the Spirit was to be the divine agent in the virginal conception.

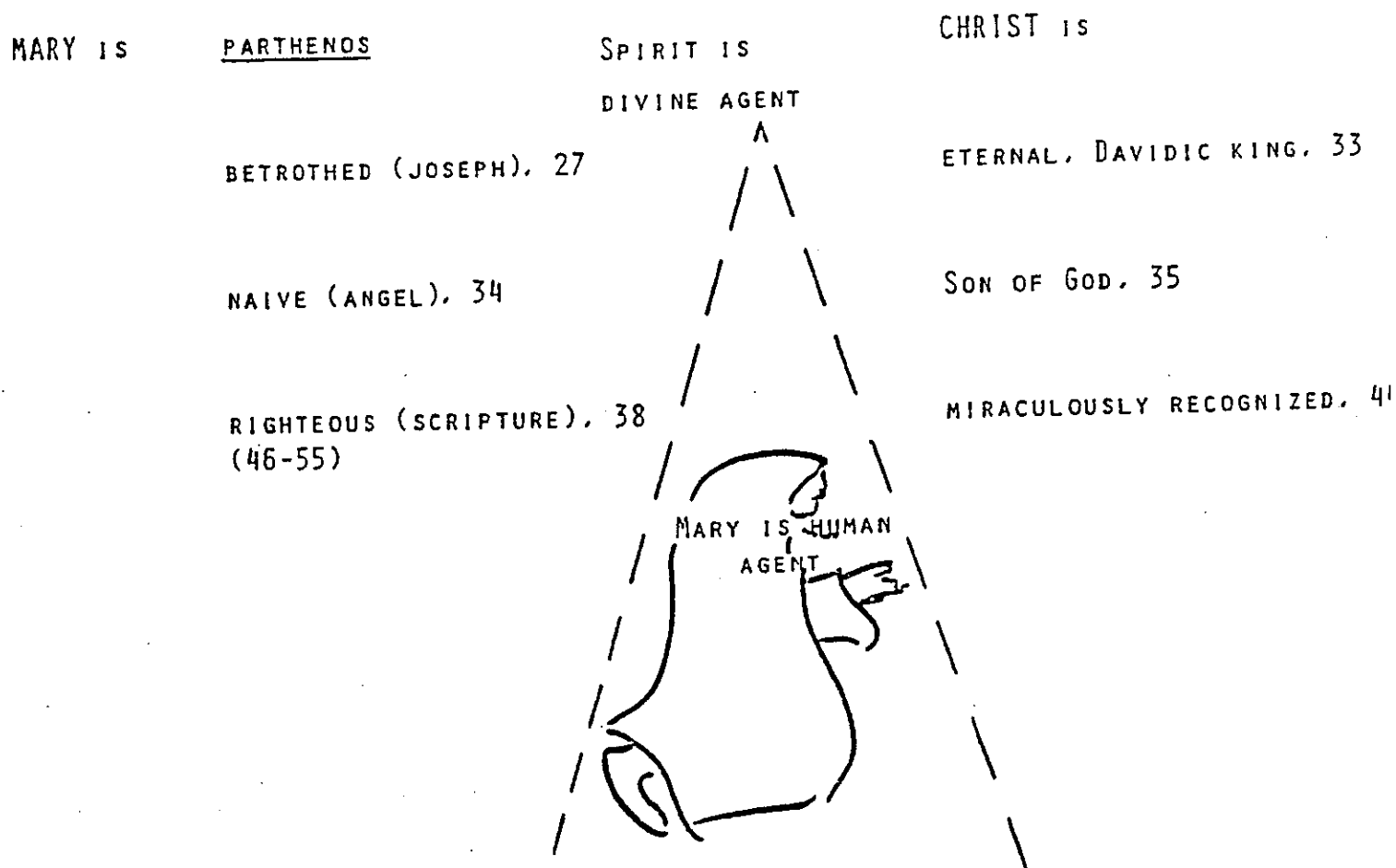
This is aided in v. 31 by the meaning of, "You will conceive in your womb," which has the idea of "taking upon oneself."

In v. 35, when the angel says that "the Holy Spirit will come upon you," this is parallel to the phrase, "the power of the Most High will overshadow you."

This "overshadowing," *episkiazo*, means "covering" in the sense of casting a shadow over, such as an eclipse.

The emphasis here is not on the method of virginal conception — though that is not completely out of view — but rather on the divine generation of Messiah.

## THE EMPHASES OF LUKE 1:35-37



Finally, Luke makes several theological points.

- 1) Most important for Luke is the supernatural nature of Jesus' conception and coming.
  - A) v. 33 emphasizes Jesus' eternal reign in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.
  - B) v. 37 emphasizes the impossibility of the virgin birth apart from a divine miracle.
  - C) vv. 43-44 emphasize the miracle of recognition by Elizabeth and John.
  - D) Luke further emphasizes Jesus as Son of God which gives Him both identity and a title.
- 2) Luke further makes the point that Mary's submissive example illustrates the fact that God favors the righteous (cf. Joseph). The point of Luke 1:38 and 48 is that the fruitful person is the one who submits himself to God and to the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

It is now appropriate to turn our attention to the prophecy of Is. 7:14, and in doing so we will note the various theories of interpretation set forth.

# INTERPRETATION THEORIES OF THE VIRGIN CONCEPTION/

## VIRGIN BIRTH PROPHECY OF ISAIAH 7:14

- I. Non Evangelical - Deny the reality of the virgin conception, or at least reject any verifiability of it.
- 1) Mythological - Birth narratives are myth. Natural laws of biology make impossible a literal virgin conception, but the myth framework allows the retaining of theological truth or meaning, i.e. Jesus is a special, unique, and significant person. (Strauss, Taylor, Bultmann & Brunner).
  - 2) Non-Messianic - Isaiah 7:14 was a sign to Ahaz only in that day. The text is not prophetic, but only appropriated by New Testament authors for their literary and theological purposes (in harmony with #1 above).
  - 3) Neo-orthodox - Accounts are theologically true and valuable, but historically non-verifiable. All we can know for sure is that the early church believed the virgin birth account (Barth).
- II. Evangelical - Affirm the historical reality of the virgin conception as a supernatural act of God.
- 1) Direct Messianic - Isaiah's prophecy was completely future and fulfilled in Jesus only (E.J. Young).
  - 2) Indirect Messianic - Isaiah 7:14 has a dual predictive purpose: 1) a near fulfillment in Ahaz's day, and 2) a far and ultimate fulfillment in Jesus. The word alma (Hebrew) is one in which no instance can be brought forth to designate a young women who is not a virgin. The son to be born is a reference either to 1) Isaiah's son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz or 2) the royal child Hezekiah. At the time of the prophetic word, the woman in view was a virgin, though her conception was not virginal. This would occur only once, and in the climatic fulfillment with Mary and the Lord Jesus.



## THE VIRGIN BIRTH

### I. THE NATURE OF THE DOCTRINE

#### A. The Meaning of the Doctrine.

1. It means that through a special miracle wrought by the Holy Spirit, Jesus was born of the virgin Mary "without the benefit of a human father." (Van A. Harvey, Handbook of Theological Terms, p. 248).
2. It means that no coitus took place, human or divine. The Holy Spirit is not to be regarded as the Father of Jesus and has never been so regarded by the Christian Church or any sect or heretical group within it. (J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. in Baker's Dictionary of Theology, p. 544).
3. "Properly understood, the Virgin Birth does not in any sense imply that there is a sinful or unclean element in normal sexual relations." (J. V. Langmead Casserly in Halvarson's A Handbook of Christian Theology, p. 370).
4. The doctrine testified to the conviction of the earliest Church "that Jesus Christ was the unique coming of God into human life, that he was the Messiah." (Harvey, op. cit., p. 248).

#### B. Terminology

1. Strictly speaking, the term "virgin birth" is a misnomer. The term should be virginal conception. The doctrine affirms that Jesus was born as other men are, but denies that he was conceived as other men are.
2. Jerome (c. 342-420) formulated the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. He taught also "that Jesus passed through the wall of Mary's womb in the same way he passed through the wall of Joseph's tomb." (Dale Moody, The Word of Truth, p. 417). Moody appropriately observes that "that sounds more like Greek mythology than New Testament Christology."

#### C. Unique Nature

1. The Bible bears witness to other miraculous conceptions, but to no other virginal conceptions.

2. There is no parallel in the non-Christian religions either. "Without exception the pagan stories, with which comparison has been attempted, involve the cohabitation of a god with a human being." (Buswell, op. cit., p. 544).

#### D. The Virgin Birth in Controversy

##### 1. In Liberal Protestantism

- a. Generally repudiated because of a bias against the supernatural.
- b. In recent years, rejected because of its alleged weak biblical foundations.

2. In Protestant Orthodoxy and Fundamentalism  
In reaction against Liberalism, Protestant Orthodoxy and particularly Fundamentalism have often made belief in the virgin birth a test of sound doctrine. They have thereby given the doctrine a position of centrality which it does not have in the biblical witness.

##### 3. In Neo-Orthodoxy

- a. Emil Brunner vigorously rejects the doctrine (Dogmatics, II, pp. 350-56).
- b. Karl Barth vigorously defends it (I, 2, pp. 172-202).

## II. THE CASE AGAINST THE VIRGIN BIRTH

### A. Biblical

1. It is mentioned only in the birth narratives in Mt. 1 and Luke 1. It is alleged that these were full of legendary accretions.
2. It is not mentioned elsewhere in the NT. Thus Paul and John either did not know it or did not agree with it or think it important.
3. It does not fit with other biblical evidence.
  - a. The biblical genealogies in Mt. 1 and Luke 3 trace Jesus' lineage through Joseph, not Mary.
  - b. Twice John calls Jesus the son of Joseph. John 1:45; 6:42.
  - c. Rom. 1:3

4. It is argued that the doctrine of the virgin birth is probably introduced into the biblical text (at least in Matthew) because of a misunderstanding of Isaiah 7:14. The Hebrew word almah, meaning a girl of marriagable age, is translated in the LXX by παρθένος, parthenos, which clearly means virgin. 121c

#### B. Theological

1. Brunner sees the accounts in Matthew and Luke as out of harmony with the teaching in John and Paul about the incarnation of the Eternal Son of God. He says that Matthew and Luke deal with how the Son of God came into existence, not with how the eternal Son of God became incarnate.
2. The thrust of Brunner's argument is that the doctrine of the virgin birth undercuts the true humanity of Jesus. "Is a man who is born without a human father a 'true man'?" he asks.
3. Since the Apostles do not mention the virgin birth, it does not belong to the kerygma of the church (Brunner).
4. The doctrine of the virgin birth, according to Brunner, does not safeguard the doctrine of the divinity of Christ.
  - a. The virgin birth was affirmed by the adoptionist-- Paul of Samosata.
  - b. It was also accepted by the Arians.
5. In the history of doctrine it has become associated with mariolatry, particularly the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

### III. THE CASE FOR THE VIRGIN BIRTH

#### A. Biblical.

1. There is a clear witness to it in Matthew and Luke. These are two independent traditions, Matthew setting it forth from Joseph's point of view, Luke from Mary's.
2. The biblical evidence is not as weak as is commonly supposed.
  - a. Since Mark has no birth narrative it is not surprising that there is no direct reference to the virgin birth. However, in Mark 6:3 Jesus is called the son of Mary.

In the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke he is called Joseph's son.

- b. The Gospel of John also has no birth narrative. It is to be noted, however, that in the Prologue in John 1:13 some ancient manuscripts have the singular instead of the plural--an obvious reference to the virgin birth.
- c. Paul
  - 1) Distinction between the birth of Jesus and other births.
    - a) When the NT speaks of the birth of a child it always uses the verb gennao γεννάω (33 times)
    - b) When Paul speaks of the earthly origins of Jesus, he always uses the verb ginomai γίνουμαι, to become, which is used with this meaning nowhere else in NT (Rom. 1:3; Phil. 2:7; Gal. 4:4, twice)
    - c) In Gal. 4 where Paul uses ginomai twice with reference to the birth of Jesus, three times he uses gennao, the normal NT verb, with reference to the births of Ishmael and Isaac (Gal. 4:23, 24, 29).

See Douglas V. Edwards, The Virgin Birth in History and Faith.

- 2) I Cor. 15:49 Reference to Christ as the man of heaven.
- d. I John 5:18 "He who was born of God keeps him. . ."
- 3. With reference to the genealogies there are words in both Matthew and Luke that imply that Jesus was not biologically Joseph's son.
  - a. Matt. 1:16
  - b. Luke 3:23

## B. Historical (Church Fathers and Early Creeds)

### 1. Church Fathers

- a. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 110-117) to the Smyrnaens 1:1-1: "He was in truth physically of the line of David, Son of God by the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin. . ."

- b. Aristides in his Apology about 140 A.D.: "The Christians reckon the beginning of their religion from Jesus Christ, who is named the Son of God most high; and it is said that God came down from heaven, and from a Hebrew virgin took and clad himself with flesh, and in a daughter of man there dwelt the Son of God."
- c. Justin Martyr in The Dialogue with Trypho (c. 170) describes Jesus as "the first-born of every creature, who became man by the Virgin, who suffered and was crucified under Pontius Pilate. . ."

## 2. Early Creedal Statements

- a. The Apostles' Creed: "Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary."
- b. Constantinople (A.D. 381): "Incarnate of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary."
- c. Creed of Chalcedon (451): "Born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to his manhood."
- d. Athanasian Creed (5th cent): "God of the substance of the Father; begotten before the worlds; man of the substance of his mother, born in the world."

(See Barclay, The Plain Man Looks at the Apostles' Creed, pp. 72-73)

## C. Theological

- 1. Brunner notwithstanding, the doctrine of the virgin birth in no way conflicts with incarnational theology. It simply tells how the Eternal Son of God became a man. There is no other explanation that claims biblical authority and early attestation by the Church.
- 2. Barth treats it as a miracle that parallels that of the empty tomb. It is the sign of the Incarnation just as the empty tomb is the sign of the Resurrection. These two miracles mean that the life of Jesus is marked off from every other human life. "Marked off in regard to its origin: it is free of the arbitrariness which underlies all our existence. And marked off in regard to its goal: it is victorious over death to which we are all liable." (I, 2, p. 182). "It is because He veiled himself here that He could and had to unveil Himself as He did at Easter." (I, 2, p. 183).
- 3. In Jesus God and humankind meet. The virgin birth bears appropriate witness to these two elements.

4. Barth: "The Church knew well what it was doing when it posted this doctrine on guard, as it were, at the door of the mystery of Christmas. It can never be in favor of anyone thinking he can hurry past this guard." (I, 2, p. 181)
5. Warning: In the Catholic Church emphasis upon the virgin birth has led to mariolatry. A clear distinction should be made between Mary as an example of faith and Mary as the object of faith.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. We should affirm the virgin birth.
2. We should remember, however, that:
  - a. Witness to the virgin birth was not a part of the primitive kerygma.
  - b. It is possible to believe in the miracle of the Incarnation without believing in the miracle of the virgin birth.
  - c. It is possible to believe in the virgin birth and not have an orthodox Christology (e.g., as in Paul of Samosata and Arius).
  - d. "On the subject of the Virgin Birth we ought to be especially tender and sympathetic towards the convictions of those who differ from ourselves." (Oliver C. Quick, Doctrines of the Creed, p. 168).

Portions of the notes on the  
Virgin Birth are those of Dr.  
Robert Culpepper

According to William LaSor, God in His infinite foresight directed the prophet to use the word "almah" in Isaiah 7:14. "Isaiah *might* have used the word "bethulah." He certainly knew the word, for he used it in Isaiah 23:4 and 12, ... He *used* the word "almah," "girl" or "young woman." The word was capable of being used with reference to the young woman in the days of Ahaz; it was also capable of being used of Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus." Hence, God caused Isaiah to use a word capable of carrying the full weight of His message for His people in Ahaz's time, in the Gospel writer's time and in our time.

William LaSor, *Isaiah 7:14- "Young Woman" or "Virgin?"* (Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1953), p.1.

Belief in the virgin birth is often somewhat of a testcase to determine one's view about miracles, the supernatural, God's action in the world and the historicity and literal nature of the Bible. At least four views exist concerning the origin of the New Testament virgin birth stories:

- (1) the traditional Christian view, which sees it as a fact of history, i.e., it happened;
- (2) the antagonist view, traceable to the early second century, which sees it as an error, i.e., Christians got it wrong for whatever reason;
- (3) the modern rationalist view, which sees it as a natural phenomenon re-explained supernaturally, i.e., Jesus was conceived through normal means, with Christians later describing the event supernaturally; and
- (4) the modern mythical view, which sees it as a myth or legend, i.e., a religious idea put into historical form. The modern rationalist and mythical views assume an anti-supernatural bias. The antagonist view accepts the supernatural but harbors disbelief towards Jesus as the Messiah.

## Observations

An Evangelical view of the Virgin Conception/Birth is necessary for those who affirm the trustworthiness and historical nature of the biblical accounts.

- A) inerrancy demands it
- B) Gospel writers tend not to amplify upon theological significance, but upon its facticity
- C) Luke as historian/physician has made a careful study (Lk. 1:1-4); this would have prevented him from a gullible response to an account of the virgin conception
- D) The presence of James (1/2 brother) and Mary (mother) in the early church would have forbidden the development of legendary material concerning Jesus birth.

What about the rest of N.T.?

Mark - Has no occasion or reason to mention it. Servant emp. begins with the ministry of John the Baptist.

John - Interest in pre-existence/deity. No interest in birth but incarnation.

Paul - Hints at it in Rom. 1:3, Gal. 4:4, Phil 2:6; close association with Luke would imply his knowledge and acceptance of the account.

## Theological Significance of Virgin Birth

- 1) God's deliverance has come and it calls to mind a sign (Is. 7:14) of God's great O.T. promises
- 2) Significance for Bible — can we trust Scripture at this point? Yes.
- 3) It affirms Jesus' humanity — he was really born, really one of us (Ignatius and Apostle's Creed)
- 4) It affirms his deity — it is a supernatural event (Machen, Barth)
- 5) It affirms his sinlessness by theological deduction not scriptural affirmation, which is vital to our salvation
- 6) It is a picture of regenerating grace. The initiative and power for birth is of God and parallels regeneration which is an act of God, not an act of human effort.

What about those who reject Virgin birth?

God's people are inconsistent; but problems or rejection here opens the door for distortion of Christology, which is the touchstone of Christian faith.

Early one morning, a resident of a little community near Hodgenville, Kentucky, was returning from a trip to Elizabethtown some miles away. This was a long journey in those days.

He met a neighbor who was anxious to know what was happening in the outside world. The traveler told him of events in Washington, of wars in Europe, and of other happenings he had heard about as he traveled.

"But what happened here in Hodgenville while I was away?" he asked of his friend.

"Nothing, really. Oh, I believe that Mrs. Lincoln did give birth to a baby boy last night. I think they named him Abraham. But nothing important ever happens around here."

Nothing important? If he had only known.

One night in Bethlehem, only a few simple people knew that in this little village there had transpired the greatest event in the history of the world.



## THE BIRTH OF THE KING

Matthew 1:1-25

### I. His Human Ancestry is Special 1:1-17

- 1) The caption reminds us of God's great faithfulness 1:1
  - a) As Jesus He is the Saving One
  - b) As the Christ He is the Anointed One
    - 1) A Prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15)
    - 2) A Priest like Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4)
    - 3) A King like David (Ps. 2:6-9)
  - c) As Son of David He is the Royal One
  - d) As Son of Abraham He is the Promised One
- 2) The three divisions relate to God's great covenants
  - a) The Abrahamic Covenant (Abraham to David) grants a nation and land (Gen. 12:1-3) 1:2-6
  - b) The Davidic Covenant (David to Babylon) grants a throne and city (2 Sam. 7:12-29) 1:6-11
  - c) The New Covenant (Babylon to Christ) grants the Spirit and a new heart (Jer. 31:31-34) 1:12-17
- 3) The five women resound of God's great grace
  - a) Tamar (cf. Gen. 38) - God uses the undesirable 1:3
  - b) Rahab (cf. Josh. 2) - God uses the unworthy 1:5
  - c) Ruth (cf. Ruth 1-4) - God uses the unlikely 1:5
  - d) Uriah's wife (cf. 2 Sam. 11-12) - God uses the undeserving 1:6
  - e) Mary (cf. Matt. 1-2; Luke 1-2) - God uses the unexpected 1:16

### II. His Divine Advent was Supernatural 1:18-25

- 1) God honors purity 1:18
- 2) God blesses sensitivity 1:19-21
- 3) God fulfills prophecy 1:22-23
- 4) God smiles on humility 1:24-25

## **“What Did the Early Fathers Say About the Virgin Birth?”**

“He (Christ) was in truth physically of the line of David; Son of God by the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin.”--Ignatius of Antioch, writing about A.D. 110

“We believe that God was born of a virgin because we read it.”--Jerome

“Well, he who has recorded that He was born has related also that He was born of a Virgin. If, therefore, on the evidence stated, the fact of his being born is established, as a matter of faith, it is altogether incredible, on the same evidence, that He was not born in the manner stated.”--Gregory of Nyssa's The Great Catechism 13

“...He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.”--The Apostles' Creed

## What Has the Roman Church Taught about Mary?

### 1) Immaculate Conception:

The Virgin Mary was conceived and born immaculate, that is, without the stain of original sin. Pope Pius IX, in his apostolic letter, "Ineffabilis Deus" issued on December 8, 1854, stated that "at the first moment of conception, by singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in virtue of the merits of Christ Jesus, the Savior of the human race, was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin."<sup>1</sup>

Mary was conceived as any other human being, but at the moment of her body's animation, or passive conception, her soul was created and infused by God in her body without sin.<sup>2</sup>

### 2) Her Perpetual Virginity:

Mary was a virgin *ante, in et post partum*: a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Jesus Christ. This was first implicitly defined in the second ecumenical council of Constantinople (553), and was later reemphasized in the Lateran Council of 649.

Roman Catholics see the "brothers of Jesus" as either the sons of Joseph by a previous marriage, or a term used to describe Jesus' kinsmen, possibly even cousins.

### 3) Mother of God:

This was first opposed by Nestorius. He said that Mary was the mother of a mere man who was the bearer of the divine Logos of God. His teaching was officially rejected by the Church at the ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431. According to the Church Fathers of Ephesus, Mary gave birth to the Word of God made flesh through her. They used the term *Theotokos* and said, "If anyone does not confess that Immanuel is truly God, and that on this account the holy Virgin Mary is the Mother of god (*theotokos*) inasmuch as she gave birth in the flesh to the Word of God made flesh, let him be anathema.

The New Testament does not use the term *theotokos*.

### 4) Protestant Views on Mary:

Luther, Melanchthon, and Zwingli did not question the previous Marian dogmas. They were in agreement with the Virgin Birth as recorded in the Bible and the doctrine of Mary as the *theotokos*. They even agreed with the idea of the Immaculate Conception as advocated by the Roman Catholic church in the sense that Mary was sanctified in her mother's womb.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William J. Doheny, *Papal Documents on Mary* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publ., 1954), 25.

<sup>2</sup>William Herr, *Catholic Thinkers in the Clear* (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1985), 24-59.

<sup>3</sup>Harding Meyer, "The Ecumenical Unburdening of the Mariological Problem: A Lutheran Perspective," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26:4 (Fall 1989): 683.

Luther did object to traditional Marian piety. "As a creature Mary cannot be sufficiently praised, but when the Creator himself comes and becomes our own, that is cause for rejoicing."<sup>4</sup>

Luther saw Mary as "the great example of faith . . . the most pure venerator of God . . . , who magnifies God above all things."<sup>5</sup>

If Mary detracts us from Christ and God . . . , then we must practice Christocentric moderation. Mary must be honored but Christ must be the matrix of this veneration. Mary exists for Christ alone and this is the view of the Bible. . . . Mary is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. Honor and prayer must be given to her in such a way as to injure neither Christ nor the Scriptures.<sup>6</sup>

Until his death, Luther continued to honor Mary by keeping her feast days and preaching sermons about her.

John Calvin (1509-1564)

Calvin rejected Marian feasts. The presence of Mary in worship was rejected.<sup>7</sup> However, he consistently defended the perpetual virginity of Mary,<sup>8</sup> but hesitated calling her the Mother of God (*theotokos*). Calvin considered the Immaculate Conception without scriptural basis and "unsubstantiated in Christian revelations."<sup>9</sup> Mary's holiness is brought about by her having been chosen for the work of God's kingdom.

Calvin objected to the excessive honor given to Mary by the Roman Catholics saying, "it is certain the papists have made an idol of Mary."<sup>10</sup> He denounced the Roman Catholic belief that claims that Mary has a special cooperation in mediating God's grace and redemption to humankind. He insisted that there is only one Mediator between God and humankind—Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup>

Karl Barth (1886-1968):

Mariology is seen as "The cancer of theology."<sup>12</sup>

The Church has elevated a "handmaid" to the "queen of heaven" forcing an unavoidable competition with "our Father who art in heaven."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 685.

<sup>5</sup>M. LaGuardia Aonan, "Does the Blessed Virgin Mary Have a Place Among the Protestant Churches?", *Asia Journal of Theology* 8:2 (October 1994): 272-273.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Bernard Dupuy, "The Mariology of Calvin," *Sewanee Theological Review* 38:2 (Easter 1995):

114.

<sup>8</sup>Aonan, "Does the Blessed Virgin Mary Have a Place": 273.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 274.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>John Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1990): 103-

105.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

The Gospels record 35 separate miracles performed by Christ. Matthew mentions 20 of them; Mark, 18; Luke, 20; and John, 7. These, however, are not all of the miracles of our Lord. Matthew, for instance, alludes to 12 occasions when Jesus performed a number of wonderful works (4:23-24; 8:16; 9:35; 10:1, 8; 11:4-5; 11:20-24; 12:15; 14:14; 14:36; 15:30; 19:2; 21:14). The Gospel writers selected according to their purpose from the large number which the Lord performed. There are many ways of arranging the individual miracles noted in the Gospels, depending on the purpose of the commentator. Following is the order of their occurrence, as nearly as that order can be determined.

1. Turning water into wine (John 2:1-11)
2. Healing a nobleman's son at Cana (John 4:46-54)
3. Healing a lame man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9)
4. First miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11)
5. Delivering a synagogue demoniac (Mark 1:23-28; Luke 4:31-36)
6. Healing Peter's mother-in-law (Matt. 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39)
7. Cleansing a leper (Matt. 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16)
8. Healing a paralytic (Matt. 9:2-8; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-26)
9. Healing a man with a withered hand (Matt. 12:9-13; Mark 3:1-5; Luke 6:6-10)
10. Healing a centurion's servant (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10)
11. Raising a widow's son (Luke 7:11-15)
12. Healing a blind and dumb demoniac (Matt. 12:22; Luke 11:14)
13. Stilling a storm (Matt. 8:18, 23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25)
14. Delivering the Gadarene demoniacs (Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39)
15. Healing a woman with an issue of blood (Matt. 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48)
16. Raising Jairus' daughter (Matt. 9:18-19, 23-26; Mark 5:22-24, 35-43; Luke 8:41-42, 49-56)
17. Healing two blind men (Matt. 9:27-31)
18. Delivering a dumb demoniac (Matt. 9:32-33)
19. Feeding the 5,000 (Matt. 14:14-21; Mark 6:34-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:5-13)
20. Walking on the water (Matt. 14:24-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21)
21. Delivering a Syrophenician's daughter (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30)
22. Healing a deaf mute in Decapolis (Mark 7:31-37)
23. Feeding 4,000 (Matt. 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-9)
24. Healing a blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26)
25. Delivering a demon-possessed boy (Matt. 17:14-18; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:38-42)
26. Finding the tribute money (Matt. 17:24-27)
27. Healing a man born blind (John 9:1-7)
28. Healing a crippled woman on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10-17)
29. Healing a man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-6)
30. Raising of Lazarus (John 11:17-44)
31. Cleansing ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19)
32. Healing blind Bartimaeus (Matt. 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43)
33. Cursing the fig tree (Matt. 21:18-19; Mark 11:12-14)
34. Restoring Malchus' ear (Luke 22:49-51; John 18:10)
35. Second miraculous catch of fish (John 21:1-11)

## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST AND THEIR THEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

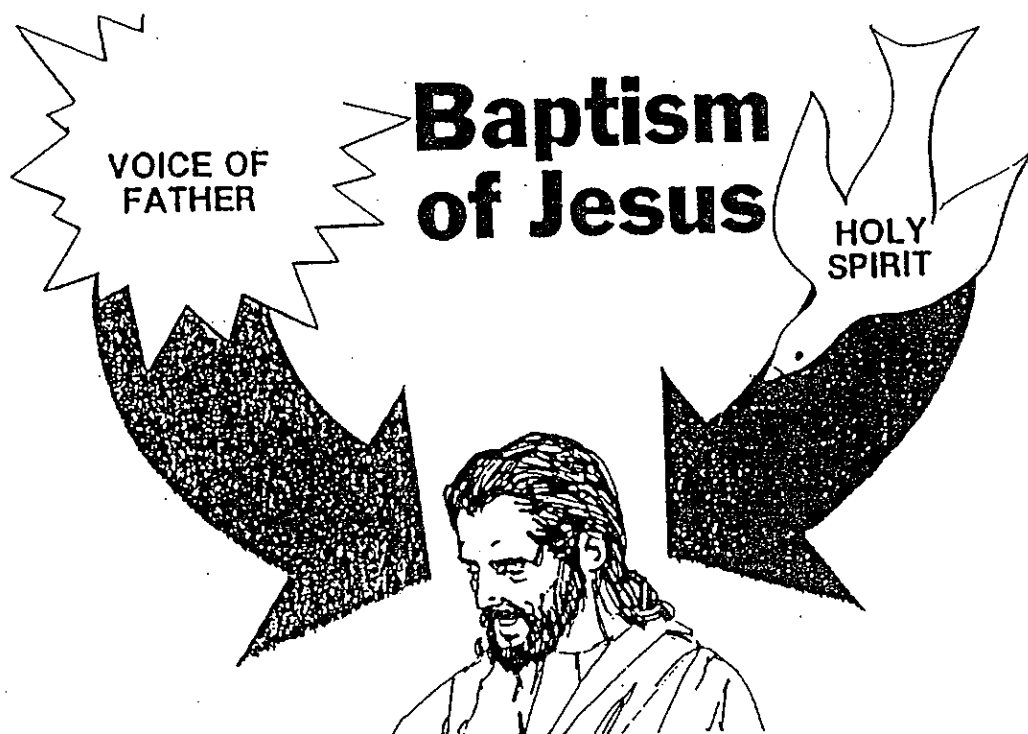
Karl Barth has said, "Now it is no accident that for us the Virgin birth is paralleled by the miracle of which the Easter witness speaks, the miracle of the empty tomb. These two miracles belong together. They constitute, as it were, a single sign ..." There is much to commend in Barth's statement, and therefore in our study of Christology we devote an individual lecture to each. There are also, however, other crucial events in the life of Christ that demand our attention and mediation. We shall note four of these.

### I. The Baptism

This event is recorded in all three synoptics and is also alluded to in John (Matt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:31-34). Taking Matthew's gospel, a number of theological purposes can be gleaned from this historical moment in the life of our Saviour:

- 1) Inauguration of His public ministry vv. 13-14
- 2) Submission of His Life to the Father v. 15
- 3) Identification of Himself with sinful men vv. 15-17
- 4) Adoration of the Father v. 17
- 5) Sanctification of the Spirit v. 16
- 6) Revelation of the Triune God vv. 16-17
- 7) Illustration and Definition of His Messianic Mission 3:17

Verse 17 is especially crucial to our last observation, for the Father's declaration is a combination of Ps. 2:7 and Is. 42:1. Psalm 2 is Messianic. Isaiah 42 is the first of the Servant Songs. Thus in the declaration of the Father, the course of ministry for our Lord is set: He is indeed Messiah, but HIS MESSIAHSHIP WILL BE REALIZED BY SUFFERING SERVICE. It is no accident that the spirit which has anointed him (filled in Luke) immediately leads (Matt.), drives (Mark) Him into the wilderness to be tempted. His willingness to be this kind of Messiah is to be immediately put to the test.



### Points of Application

- 1) Submission to God, as exemplified in Jesus, brings true spiritual greatness.
- 2) Submission to God, as exemplified in Jesus, brings God's pleasure.

### II. The Temptation

This encounter is recorded in the synoptics, with Matthew and Luke giving the most extensive account (Matt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13). The comments of Ralph Earle in the NIV Study Bible are helpful at this point:

This testing of Jesus (the Greek verb translated "tempted" can also be rendered "tested"), which was divinely intended, has as its primary background Dt. 8:1-5, from which Jesus also quotes in his first reply to the devil (see v. 4). There Moses recalls how the Lord led the Israelites in the desert 40 years "to humble you and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands." Here at the beginning of his ministry Jesus is subjected to a similar test and shows himself to be the true Israelite who lives "on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." And whereas Adam and Eve failed the great test and plunged the whole race into sin (Gen. 3), Jesus was faithful and thus demonstrated his qualification to become the Savior of all who receive him. It was, moreover, important that Jesus be tested/tempted as Israel and we are, so that he could become our "merciful and faithful high priest" (Heb. 2:17) and thus be "able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:15; see Heb. 4:15-16). Finally, as the one who remained faithful in temptation he became the model for all believers when they are tempted.

## **Temptation of Jesus**

GENESIS 3:6	LUKE 4:1-13	1 JOHN 2:16
TREE GOOD FOR FOOD	TURN STONES TO BREAD	LUST OF THE FLESH
PLEASANT TO THE EYES	KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD	LUST OF THE EYES
DESIRED TO MAKE ONE WISE	CAST YOURSELF DOWN	PRIDE OF LIFE

Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin."

Hebrews 4:15

Satan's attempt is to persuade Jesus to avoid the road of a suffering servant Messiah which His Father has planned (cf. Matt. 3:17). Temptations to under-confidence, other-confidence, and over-confidence are met with rebukes from the Word of God (all three coming from Deuteronomy). Thus Christ demonstrates both His qualifications to be Messiah as well as His sinlessness, a reality affirmed numerous times in scripture (Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22).

\* Could Jesus Have Sinned In His Incarnate State?

The issue of the "impeccability" (Lat. *non potuit peccare*, "not able to sin") or "peccability" (Lat. *potuit non peccare* "able not to sin") of Christ has been debated by evangelicals for centuries. Two facts must be affirmed regardless of one's position:

- 1) Christ was genuinely tempted
- 2) Christ did not sin

Paul Enns provides a nice summary of both perspectives, though his advocacy of Impeccability is quite obvious:

#### PECCABILITY

The question in the debate is whether or not Christ *could* have sinned. Generally (not always), Calvinists believe that Christ could not have sinned, whereas Arminians generally believe that Christ could have sinned but did not.

Those who hold to the peccability of Christ do so on the basis of Hebrews 4:15: He "has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." If the temptation was genuine then Christ had to be able to sin, otherwise the temptation was not a genuine temptation. Charles Hodge, a Reformed theologian, is perhaps the best representative of this view. He states:

If He was a true man He must have been capable of sinning. That He did not sin under the greatest provocation; that when He was reviled He blessed; when He suffered He threatened not; that He was dumb, as a sheep before its shearers, is held up to us as an example. Temptation implies the possibility of sin. If from the constitution of his person it was impossible for Christ to sin, then his temptation was unreal and without effect, and He cannot sympathize with his people.

The supposed strength of this view is that it alone identifies Christ with humanity in His temptations—they were real temptations. The weaknesses of this view are that it does not sufficiently consider Christ in His Person as God as well as man. Additionally, the word *temptation* (Gk. *peirazo*) is also used of God as well as man (Acts 15:10; 1 Cor. 10:9; Heb. 3:9) and the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:9). It is unlikely that anyone would say the Father or the Holy Spirit could have sinned. The conclusion is that temptation does not demand the ability to sin. The people genuinely tempted God the Father and



## The Peccability versus Impeccability of Christ

	Peccability	Impeccability
<b>Definition</b>	Christ could sin.	Christ could not sin.
<b>Key Phrase</b>	Able not to sin ( <i>Potuit non peccare</i> )	Not able to sin ( <i>Non potuit peccare</i> )
<b>Hebrews 4:15</b>	Christ was tempted in all things as we are, yet he did not commit sin (sin is seen in its result). Real temptation admits the possibility of succumbing to the temptation.	Christ was tempted in all things as we are, but he did not have a sin nature (sin is seen as nature, or state of existence).
<b>Question of True Humanity or True Deity</b>	If Jesus could not sin, how could he be truly human?	If Jesus could sin, how could he be truly divine?
<b>Points of Agreement</b>	Christ's temptations were real (Heb. 4:15). Christ experienced struggle (Matt. 26:36-46). Christ did not sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; James 5:6; 1 Peter 2:22; 3:18; 1 John 3:5).	
<b>Logical Argumentation for and Against Peccability</b>	<b>For Peccability</b>	<b>Against Peccability</b>
	<p>If Christ could be tempted, then he could have sinned. Peccability is a necessary deduction from temptability. Temptation implies the possibility of sin.</p> <p>If Christ was not able to sin, then the temptation was not real and he cannot sympathize with his people.</p> <p>If Christ is impeccable, then his temptations were slight.</p> <p>If Christ could not sin, then he had no free will.</p>	<p>Temptability does not imply susceptibility. Just because an army can be attacked does not mean that it can be conquered. This also proceeds from the false assumption that what applies to us also applies necessarily to Christ.</p> <p>Although Christ's temptations are not always exactly parallel to our own, he was tried through his human nature as we are. However, he had no sin nature and he was a divine person also.</p> <p>Christ's temptations were in every way like ours except that they did not originate in evil forbidden desires. He was tempted from without, not from within.</p> <p>Christ manifested his free will by not sinning. Christ was free to do the will of the Father. Being of one will with the Father, he was not free to go against that will.</p>

the Holy Spirit, but there was no likelihood of those Persons of the Trinity sinning.

## IMPECCABILITY

Those who hold to impeccability suggest Christ's temptation by Satan was genuine, but it was impossible for Christ to sin. Several observations should be noted.

*Observations.* The purpose of the temptation was not to see if Christ could sin, but to show that He could not sin. The temptation came at a critical time: the beginning of Christ's public ministry. The temptation was designed to show the nation what a unique Savior she had: the impeccable Son of God. It is also noteworthy that it was not Satan who initiated the temptation but the Holy Spirit (Matt. 4:1). If Christ could have sinned, then the Holy Spirit solicited Christ to sin, but that is something God does not do (James 1:13).

Christ's peccability could relate only to His human nature; His divine nature was impeccable. Although Christ had two natures, He was nonetheless one Person and could not divorce Himself of His deity. Wherever He went, the divine nature was present. If the two natures could be separated then it could be said that He could sin in His humanity, but because the human and divine natures cannot be separated from the Person of Christ, and since the divine nature cannot sin, it must be affirmed that Christ could not have sinned.

*Evidence.* The evidence for the impeccability of Christ is set forth by Shedd and others in the following way.

- 1) The immutability of Christ (Heb. 13:8). Christ is unchangeable and therefore could not sin. If Christ could have sinned while on earth, then He could sin now because of His immutability. If He could have sinned on earth, what assurance is there that He will not sin now?
- 2) The omnipotence of Christ (Matt. 28:18). Christ was omnipotent and therefore could not sin. Weakness is implied where sin is possible, yet there was no weakness of any kind in Christ. How could He be omnipotent and still be able to sin?
- 3) The omniscience of Christ (John 2:25). Christ was omniscient and therefore could not sin. Sin depends on ignorance in order that the sinner may be deceived, but Christ could not be deceived because He knows all things, including the hypothetical (Matt. 11:21). If Christ could have sinned then He really did not know what would happen if He would sin.
- 4) The deity of Christ. Christ is not only man but also God. If He were only a man then He could have sinned, but God cannot sin and in a union of the two natures, the human nature submits to the divine nature (otherwise the finite is stronger than the infinite). United in the one Person of Christ are the two natures, humanity and deity; because Christ is also deity He could not sin.
- 5) The nature of temptation (James 1:14-15). The temptation that came to Christ was *from without*. However, for sin to take place, there must be an *inner* response to the outward temptation. Since Jesus did not possess a sin nature, there was nothing within Him to

respond to the temptation. People sin because there is an inner response to the outer temptation.

- 6) The will of Christ. In moral decisions, Christ could have only one will: to do the will of His Father; in moral decisions the human will was subservient to the divine will. If Christ could have sinned then His human will would have been stronger than the divine will.
- 7) The authority of Christ (John 10:18). In His deity, Christ had complete authority over His humanity. For example, no one could take the life of Christ except He would lay it down willingly (John 10:18). If Christ had authority over life and death, He certainly had authority over sin; if He could withhold death at will, He could also withhold sin at will.

### III. The Transfiguration

This is also recorded in the synoptics (Matt. 17:1-8; Mk. 9:2-13; Lk. 9:28-36), with an additional reference in 2 Pet. 1:16-18). Theological significances include:

- 1) The disciples receive a foretaste of his future coming and kingdom.
- 2) A revelation of the glory (deity) of the Son of God.
- 3) A confirmation of Peter's Confession in 16:13-20.
- 4) Encouragement in light of His passion prediction (16:21-23) and the task to which disciples are called (16:24-28).
- 5) A declaration of the Son's unique revelation from the Father to the world, and His superiority to and fulfillment of the Law (Moses) and Prophets (Elijah).
- 6) A reaffirmation of the Father's love for and approval of the Son as He prepares to go to the cross.

### IV. The Ascension

This climatic ending to our Lord's earthly ministry is recorded only by Luke in his two volumes (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11). Paul Enns notes four significances of the ascension:

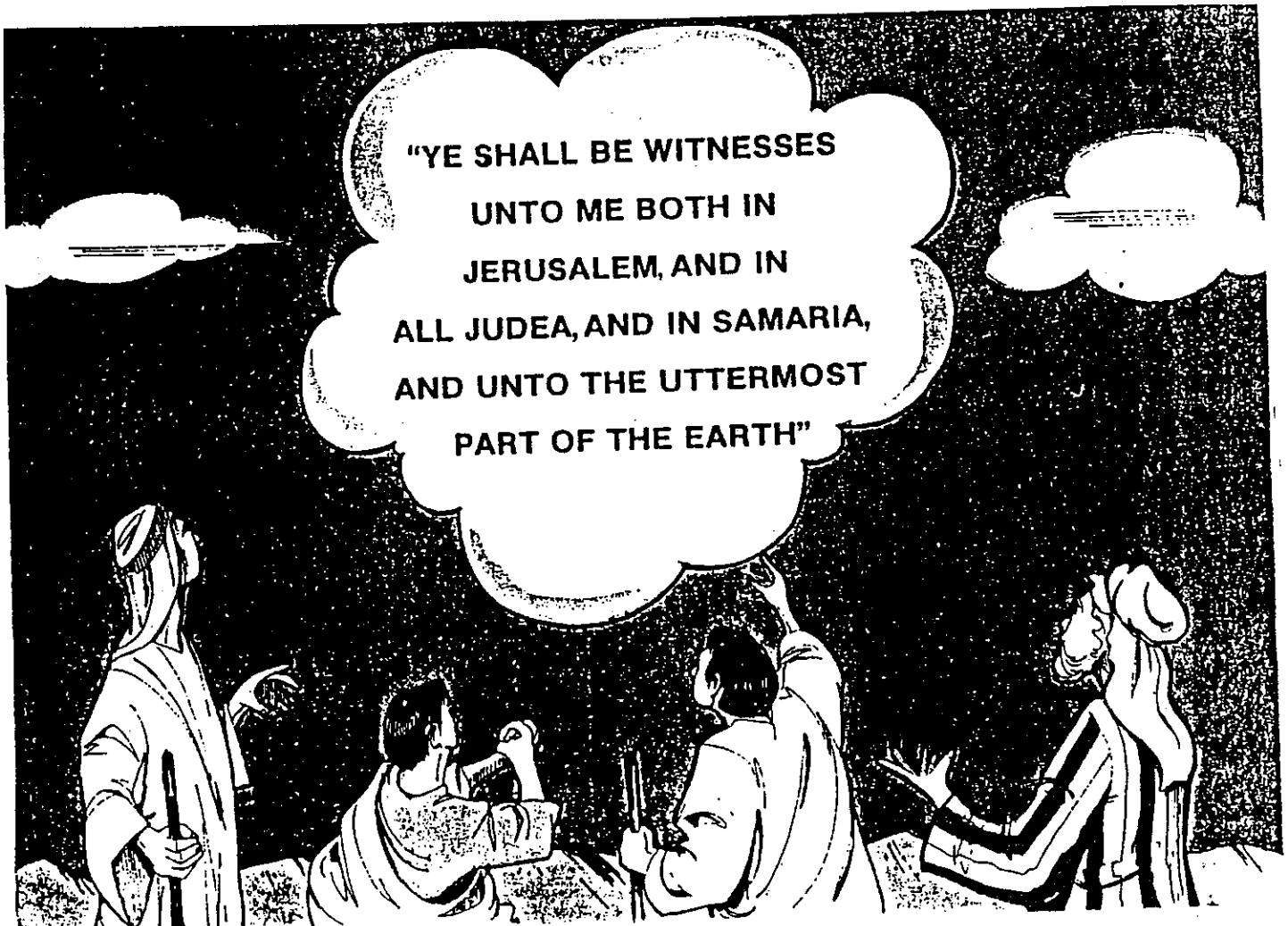
- 1) It ended the earthly ministry of Christ. It marked the end of the period of self-limitation during the days of His sojourn on earth.
- 2) It ended the period of His humiliation. His glory was no longer veiled following the ascension (John 17:5; Acts 9:3, 5). Christ is now exalted and enthroned in heaven.
- 3) It marks the first entrance of resurrected humanity into heaven and the beginning of a new work in heaven (Heb. 4:14-16; 6:20). A representative of the human race in a resurrected, glorified body is the Christian's intercessor.
- 4) It made the descent of the Holy Spirit possible (John 16:7). It was necessary for Christ to ascend to heaven in order that He could send the Holy Spirit.

Curtis Vaughn adds to these by noting:

- 5) It is necessary corollary of the resurrection. That is, it is the abiding proof that the resurrection of Jesus was more than a temporary resuscitation. To accept the bodily resurrection but deny the ascension, one must affirm either that Christ is still an inhabitant of earth or that he later died again.
- 6) It conveyed to the disciples the realization that the appearances, which had occurred at intervals over a period of forty days, were at an end. Thus it relieved their tension, put their minds at ease, so that, with the arrival of each new day, they did not wonder whether their Lord would again reveal Himself.
- 7) It suggested that Jesus was no longer to be perceived by physical sensation but by spiritual insight.

To this we would add one final importance:

- 8) It provided the occasion for the commissioning for witness and the promise of the Spirit (Acts 1:1-8).



# Different Views Of God

**Monarchianism**  
*(Mono = One Arche = Ruler)*  
**One Person One God**

A second- and third-century heresy that denies the doctrine of the Trinity maintaining that the only true God has always existed as one Person not three Persons. The teaching exists today in two forms:

## Modalistic

This view holds that God exists as one Person Who is revealed in history in different modes using different names. The Father Son and Holy Spirit are different names for the same *Person*. Therefore, the Father was born at Bethlehem and crucified at Calvary, but at the time He was called Jesus.

**Currently Taught  
 by The United  
 Pentecostal  
 Church**

## Dynamic

This heresy teaches that Jesus is not God but a special man who became (or was adopted as) the Son of God (usually thought to have occurred at His Baptism).

**Currently  
 Taught by  
 The Watchtower**

**Trinitarianism**  
*(Trinus = triple)*  
**Three Persons One God**

The Biblical view of God. The Father Son and Holy Spirit are three separate Persons who have always existed as **ONE TRUE GOD**. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three Gods nor are they three names for the same Person.

Although the word Trinity is not found in the Bible, the idea or teaching is found throughout scripture.

**Currently Taught by  
 The Bible and Christians**

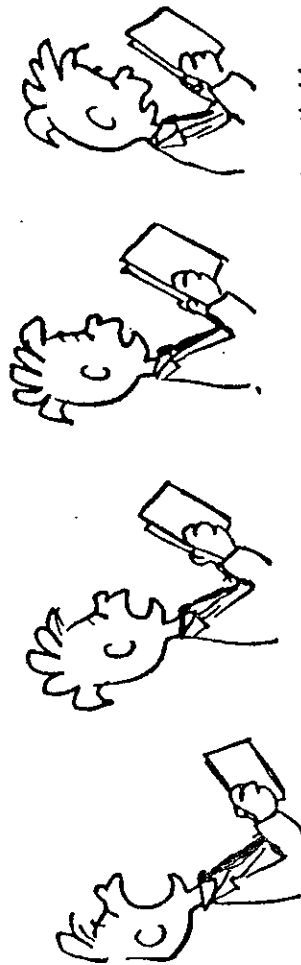
**Tritheism**  
*(Tri = Three,  
 Theos = God)*

**Three Persons  
 Three Gods**

The belief that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate Gods. This is actually a form of Polytheism (the belief in more than one true God.)

**Currently Taught  
 by Mormonism**

# "The Hymnal"



## First Verse

### THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,  
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by  
the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third  
day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth  
on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall  
come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion  
of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body;  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

### THE NICENE CREED

We believe in 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, and 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 sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come  
again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom  
shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who  
proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the

## Introduction

Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.  
And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge  
one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection  
of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

### THE DEFINITION OF CHALCEDON

(A.D. 451)

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

### THE ATHANASIAN CREED

(4th or 5th cent.)

It is necessary, however, to eternal salvation that he should also  
faithfully believe in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now the  
right faith is that we should believe and confess that our Lord Jesus  
Christ, the Son of God, is equally both God and man.

He is God from the Father's substance, begotten before time; and he  
is man from his mother's substance, born in time. Perfect God, perfect  
man composed of a rational soul and human flesh, equal to the Father  
in respect of his divinity, less than the Father in respect of his humanity.

Who, although he is God and man, is nevertheless not two but one  
Christ. He is one, however, not by the transformation of his divinity

into flesh, but by the taking up of his humanity into God; one certainly not by confusion of substance, but by oneness of person. For just as rational soul and flesh are a single man, so God and man are a single Christ.

Who suffered for our salvation, descended to hell, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sat down at the Father's right hand, whence he will come to judge living and dead: at whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies, and will render an account of their deeds; and those who have behaved well will go to eternal life, those who have behaved badly to eternal fire.

This is the Catholic faith. Unless a man believes it faithfully and steadfastly, he will not be able to be saved.

#### THE SECOND HELVETIC CONFESSION

(1566)

There are in one and the same Jesus Christ our Lord, two natures, the divine and the human nature; and we say that these two are so conjoined or united that they are not swallowed up, confounded, or mingled together, but rather united or joined together in one person, the properties of each nature being safe and remaining still; so that we do worship one Christ our Lord and not two; I say, one, true God and man; as touching his divine nature, of the same substance with the Father, and as touching his human nature, of the same substance with us, and "like unto us in all things, sin only excepted."

#### THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

(1530)

The Word, that is, the Son of God, took unto him man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably joined together in unity of person; one Christ, true God and true man: who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried.

#### THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES OF RELIGION

(1571)

The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance; and so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say,

#### Introduction

the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried.

(1643-1646)

#### THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.

#### THE THEOLOGICAL DECLARATION OF BARMEN

(1934)

Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and death... As Jesus Christ is God's assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so in the same way and with the same seriousness he is also God's mighty claim upon our whole life. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for a free, grateful service to his creatures... We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords... The Christian Church is the congregation of the brethren in which Jesus Christ acts presently as the Lord in Word and sacrament through the Holy Spirit.

#### THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

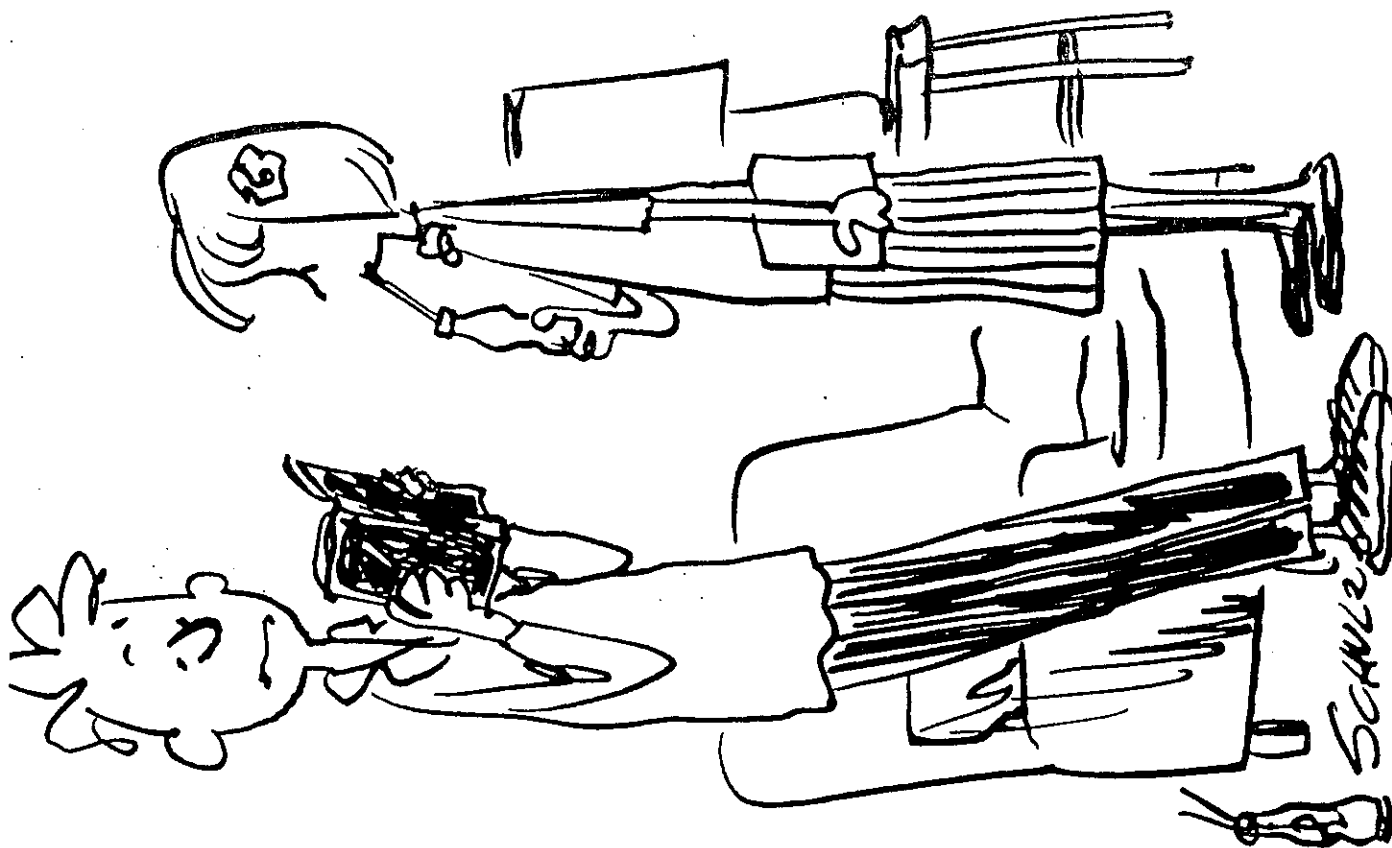
A fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common callings to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In order to establish peace or communion between sinful human beings and Himself, as well as to fashion them into a fraternal community, God determined to intervene in human history in a way both new and definitive. For He sent His Son, clothed in our flesh, in order that through this Son He might snatch men from the power of darkness and of Satan (cf. Col 1:13; Acts 10:38) and that in this Son He might reconcile the world to Himself (cf. 2 Cor 5:19). Through Him, God made all orders of existence. God further appointed Him heir of all things, so that in the Son He might restore them all (cf. Eph 1:10).

For Jesus Christ was sent into the world as a real Mediator between God and men. Since He is God, all divine fullness dwells bodily in Him (Col 2:9). According to His human nature, He is the new Adam, made head of a renewed humanity, and full of grace and of truth (Jn 1:14). Therefore the Son of God walked the ways of a true Incarnation that He might make men sharers in the divine nature. He became poor for our sakes, though He had been rich, in order that His poverty might enrich us (2 Cor 8:9). The Son of Man came not that He might be served, but that He might be a servant, and give His life as a ransom for the many—that is, for all (cf. Mk 10:45).

The sainted Fathers of the Church firmly proclaim that what was not taken up by Christ was not healed. Now, what He took up was our entire human nature such as it is found among us in our misery and poverty, though without our sin (cf. Heb 4:15; 9:28). For Christ said concerning Himself, whom the Father made holy and sent into the world (cf. Jn 10:36): "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me; to bring good news to the poor he sent me, to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim to the captives release, and sight to the blind" (Lk 4:18). And again: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Lk 19:10).

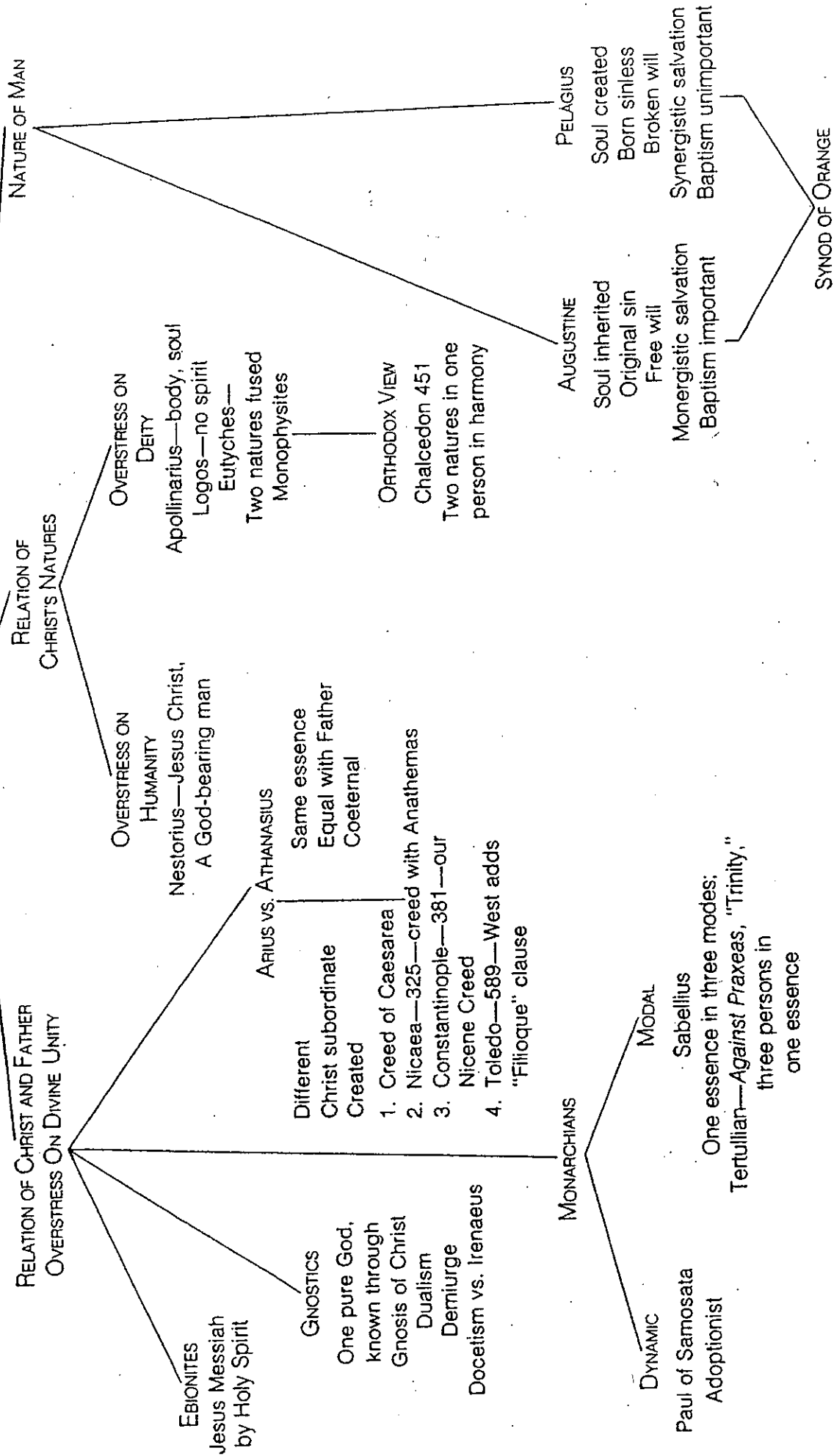
But what was once preached by the Lord, or what once wrought in Him for the saving of the human race, must be proclaimed and spread abroad to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), beginning from Jerusalem (cf. Lk 24:47). Thus, what He once accomplished for the salvation of all may in the course of time come to achieve its effect in all.



"I find the gospel very easy to understand. What confuses me is theology!"



# MAJOR THEOLOGICAL ISSUES TO 451



## CHRISTOLOGY IN THE CHURCH COUNCILS

*The resolution of trinitarian relationships and the hypostatic union of Christ*

ERROR AGAINST DEITY	CHURCH POSITION	ERRORS AGAINST HUMANITY
Arius Christ is a Created Being	NICEA, 325 CHRIST IS ETERNAL AND TRULY GOD	
	CONSTANTINOPLE, 381 FULL MANHOOD OF CHRIST IS AFFIRMED	Apollinaris dominant logos over the humanity
Nestorius Christ is two natures in a mechanical union	EPHESUS, 431 UNITY OF CHRIST'S PERSONALITY IS AFFIRMED	
	CHALCEDON, 451 ORTHODOX CHRISTOLOGY ESTABLISHED: <i>Two natures in one person</i>	Eutyches divine nature shallows up the human nature

### CHRIST'S TWO NATURES: SEVEN VIEWS

POSITION	REPRESENTATIVE	DATE	HUMAN NATURE	DIVINE NATURE
Docetism	Marcion	2nd Cent.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Denied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Affirmed
Ebionitism	Jewish Cult	2nd Cent.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Affirmed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Denied
Arianism	Arius	4th Cent.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Affirmed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Diminished
Apollinarianism	Apollinaris	4th Cent.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Diminished	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Affirmed
Nestorianism	Nestorius	5th Cent.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Affirmed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Affirmed but separated
Monophysitism	Eutyches	5th Cent.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Affirmed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Affirmed but mixed
Orthodoxy	Athanasius	1st Cent.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Affirmed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Affirmed and united

## Origen

(c. 185-254)

Origen (Greek Father: apologist and theologian--ca. 185 - ca. 254). Most information about him is in Eusebius. (His father was martyred, and apparently he had wished to die with him. Supposedly, his mother hid his clothes preventing him.)

Origen, born in Egypt and raised by Christian parents, studied under Clement. He became head of the Catechetical school for 28 years. Following a period of conflict with the Bishop of Alexandria, he moved to Caesarea in Palestine where he set up another school. He was imprisoned in 250 and tortured (under Decius). He died ca. 254 probably from the torturing. He castrated himself (ca. 210) early in his manhood. He took Mt. 19:12 literally. He was also famous and popular for his preaching.

His doctrine of God (Three major Christological points)

a. Generation of the Son

"... The existence of the Son is generated by the Father ... as an act of will proceeds from the mind without cutting a part off the mind or being separated or divided from it; in some such way the Father is to be thought of as 'begetting the Son.'"

b. Eternality of the Son

"... we have always held that God is the Father or His only begotten Son, who was born indeed of Him, and derives from Him, what He is, but without any beginning, ..." Athanasius will emphasize this aspect of Origen's theology.

c. Subordination of the Son (functional or essential?)

"I think that we should be right in saying of the Saviour that He is the image of the goodness of God, but not that goodness itself. And perhaps we may say that the Son is good, but not absolutely good. And as He is the image of the invisible God, He is by that token God, but not the God of whom Christ himself says 'That they may know thee, the only true God.' Thus, He is the image of goodness but not unconditionally good, as is the Father."

**\*\*Thus, there is tension in Origen's Christology\*\***

"Now this Son was begotten of the Father's will, for He is the 'image of the invisible God' and the 'effulgence of His glory and the impress of His substance', 'the firstborn of all creation', a thing created, wisdom ... I would dare to add that as He is the likeness of the Father there is no time when He did not exist."

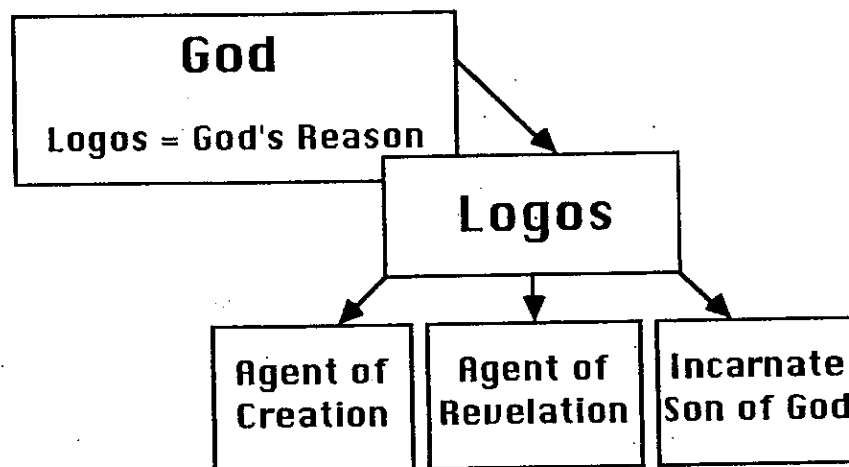
THE TRINITY:  
EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

1. Philosophy and Theology: Logos Christology

The issue Justin and others were grappling with was this: Christians claim to be monotheistic, yet they also claim that Jesus Christ is God. How can both affirmations be true?

In other words, how is Jesus Christ related to God the Father?

In order to articulate their view they took over a concept that was well known in their world and tried to fill it with biblical content. Stoic philosophers used the term logos for the "Reason" that permeates and governs the universe. (Logos is also a biblical term.)



The Logos is the eternal "Reason" of God.

The Logos is the agent of creation.

The Logos is the agent of revelation.

The Logos became incarnate in Jesus Christ.

2. Dynamic monarchianism (or adoptionism)

### Dynamic monarchianism (or adoptionism)

God adopted Jesus as a unique & special man on whom His power would rest.  
(Denial of Christ eternality & deity)

Hippolytus, an early opponent of this view describes the Christology of Theodotus, an early heretic:

"A certain Theodotus, a native of Byzantium, introduced a novel heresy, ... that Jesus was a man, born of a virgin, according to the counsel of the Father; and that after He had lived in a way common to all men, and had become pre-eminently religious, He afterward at his baptism in the Jordan received Christ, who came from above and descended upon Him. ... But some are disposed to think that this man never was God, even at the descent of the Spirit; whereas others maintain that He was made God after the resurrection from the dead."

form of Crenthian  
Gnosticism

Paul of Samosota was the most important of the dynamic monarchianists.  
He was Bishop of Antioch around 260.

- Christ was a man who was equipped with divine powers. He possessed the Logos (Logos is an impersonal power not a person)
- Objected to attributing ousia to the Word

His views were condemned in 268 by a synod in Antioch.

- Seen as making Jesus a mere man
- Some say he foreshadows "economic Trinitarianism"  
(contra essential Trinitarianism)



### 3. Modalistic monarchianism (modalism, patripassionism, Sabellianism)

The three persons are simply three ways (modes) in which the one God has revealed Himself. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are simply names. They do not indicate real distinctions.

#### 3.1. Tertullian wrote a major work against Praxeas, a prominent supporter of this view.

"In various ways has the devil rivaled the truth. Sometimes his aim has been to destroy it by defending it. He maintains that there is one only Lord, the Almighty Creator of the world, that of this doctrine of the unity he may fabricate a heresy. He says that the Father himself came down into the Virgin, was Himself born of her, Himself suffered, indeed, was Himself Jesus Christ."

#### 3.2. Sabellius, who lived in Rome in the third century, was the most important teacher of modalism.

#### 3.3. The continuing influence of Sabellianism

### 4. Origen: Tensions in his Christology

"Now this Son was begotten of the Father's will, for he is the 'image of the invisible God', and the 'effulgence of his glory and the impress of his substance', 'the firstborn of all creation', a thing created, wisdom. . . . I would dare to add that as he is the likeness of the Father there is no time when he did not exist."

### 5. Tertullian introduced the terminology "trinity", "unity of substance," and "three persons" into the discussion of the relation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

"The perversity [of Praxeas] considers that it has possession of the pure truth in thinking it impossible to believe in the unity of God without identifying the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; failing to see that the one may be all in the sense that all are of one, that is through unity of substance; while this still safeguards the mystery of the 'economy', which disposes the unity into a trinity, arranging in order the three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, . . ."

THE TRINITY:  
THE WAY TO NICAEA

1. Arius (ca. 250-336) was a presbyter in Alexandria who became champion of subordinationist teaching about Christ.

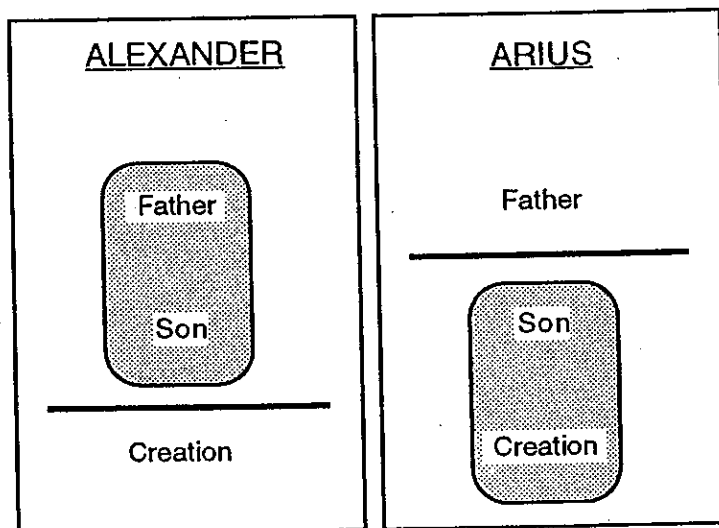
Arius wrote in a letter to one of his supporters:

"Before he was begotten or created or defined or established, he was not. For he was not unbegotten. But we are persecuted because we say, **"The Son has a beginning,** but God is without beginning. We are persecuted because we say, **"He is from nothing."**

Athanasius, one of Arius' opponents, quoted him as follows:

"The Son was not always; for since all things have come into existence from nothing, and all things are creatures and have been made, so also the Logos of God himself came into existence from nothing and there was a time when He was not; and that before He came into existence He was not; but He also had a beginning of His being created."

2. Alexander (d. 328), Bishop of Alexandria, was Arius' earliest opponent.



3. The Council of Antioch (325)

#### 4. The Council of Nicaea (325)

##### Three parties

- Arian party
- Anti-Arian party (led by Alexander)
- the party of Eusebius of Caesarea

##### The Nicene Creed

"We believe in one God, the Father All Governing, creator of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father as only begotten, that is, from the essence of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not created, **of the same essence [homoousion]** as the Father, through whom all things came into being, both in heaven and earth; Who for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate, becoming human. He suffered and the third day he rose, and ascended into the heavens. And he will come to judge both the living and the dead.

And in the Holy Spirit.

But, **those who say, Once he was not, or he was not before his generation, or he came to be out of nothing, or who assert that he, the Son of God, is of a different hypostasis or ousia, or that he is a creature, or changeable, or mutable, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them."**

##### Key Terms in the Creed of Nicaea

<sup>1</sup>homoousion = the same substance, essence

<sup>2</sup>hypostasis = <sup>3</sup>ousia = substance



THE TRINITY:  
CLARIFICATION OF THE DOCTRINE

	resurgence of Arianism	Labor of Three Cappodocians	
	Arius vs. Athanasius	Basil of Caesarea Gregory of Nyssa Gregory of Nazianzus	
325			381
<u>Council of Nicea</u>			<u>Council of Constantinople</u>

Key Terms in the discussion following Nicaea

homoousious	=	of the same substance.	Athanasian.
homoiousios	=	of like substance.	Non-Athanasian, Non-Arian
homoios	=	like, similar.	Arian.
anamoios	=	unlike.	Pointedly Arian.

1. Athanasius (ca. 296-373) was Alexander's successor as Bishop of Alexandria and became the leading defender of the Nicene faith.
  - The deity of Christ is a soteriological issue
  - The Holy Spirit is of the same essence as the Father
  - Verbal differences are not critical provided the meaning is the same.

2. The Three Cappadocians (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus) were important figures in the eventual rejection of Arianism.

-They made a clear distinction between ousia and hypostasis. (Basil was the first to affirm and defend the formula that would lead to the definitive solution of the Trinitarian controversy - "one ousia and three hypostases.")

\*\* Note that hypostasis is beginning to take on a new meaning.

-They spoke the distinctions within the Godhead in terms of interrelationships. (The Father is not generated; the Son is generated of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son.)

-They gave more attention to the deity of the Holy Spirit than had earlier theologians.

3. The Council of Constantinople was called by the Emperor Theodosius in 381. It essentially reaffirmed the decision of the Council of Nicaea.

#### The Creed of Constantinople

"We believe in one God, the Father All Governing, creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all time, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not created, **of the same essence as the Father [homoousion]**, through Whom all things came into being, Who for us men and because of our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became human. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures, and ascended to heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His Kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, Who proceeds from the Father, **Who is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and Son**, Who spoke through the prophets; and in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We confess one baptism for the remission of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen."

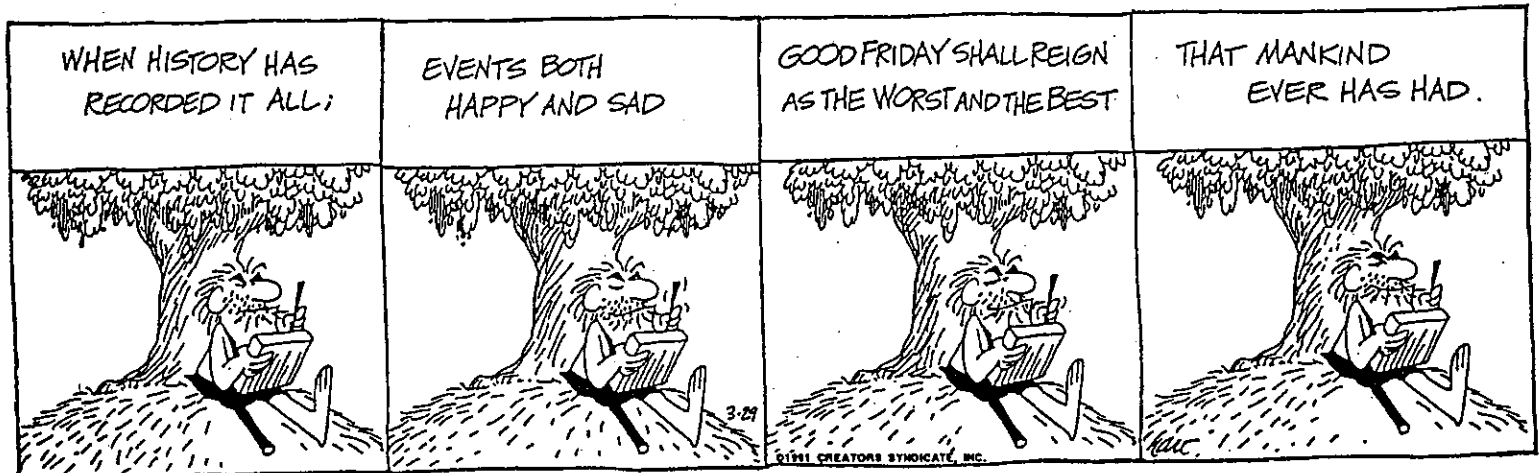
## 4. Augustine (354-430)

Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (Latin word = filioque).

God has left vestiges or signs of the Trinity (vestigia trinitatis) in his creation, especially in the pinnacle of creation - man. (Gen 1:26 - "Let us make man in our image.")

B.C.

by johnny hart



# The Nicene Creed

COUNCILS  
AND CREEDS

We believe in one God the Father All-sovereign, 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 the ages, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into the heavens, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and comes again with glory to judge living and dead, of whose kingdom there shall be no end:

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

In one holy catholic and apostolic church:

We acknowledge one baptism unto remission of sins. We look for a resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come.



Jesus calls Lazarus from the tomb. The sculptor has used this incident to emphasize the Christian hope of life beyond the grave.

ontological

oteriological

## Arian Controversy

### Elements of Arius thoughts

1. Son was created out of nothing, yet of a different essence from the Father.
2. There was when the Son was not.
3. Son 1st creation, and through him all else created.
4. On earth human element purely material, soul of man replaced by divine logos. (like Apollanarius)
5. Though a creature, Jesus to be worshipped.
6. Arius had a strong and strict adherence to scripture words.

### Elements of Athanasius thoughts

1. Jesus begotten not by the will, but by the nature of the Father.
2. Jesus of same essence as the Father (homousios)
3. Emphasis on the personality of the Son (full person yet a separate person from the Father)

325 Council of Nicea - 1st universal Council of the Church. Led by Constantine. Eusebius sought a compromise. Arius was condemned. Result: Nicene Creed

### 4 Points of exclusion to Arius

1. Same essence as the Father and a separate personality of Jesus.
2. Eternal Sonship affirmed
3. Full deity asserted
4. Full humanity asserted

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE FOURTH CENTURY ARIAN CONTROVERSY (A.D. 325-381)

### I. Three original parties

1. Arians (rejectors of homoousios)
2. Majority party led by Eusebius of Caesarea (rejected language of Arius, but were fearful of Sabellianism)
3. Nicene defenders (Athanasian defenders of homoousios)

### II. Four later parties

#### Calhoun

1. Anomoeans (anomoios), or extreme Arians  
the Son is "unlike" the Father
2. Homoeans (homoios), or political or Danubian Arians  
the Son is "like" the Father  
Ursacius, Valens, Germinius, Eudoxius of Antioch, Acacius of Antioch
3. Homoeousians (homoiousios), sometimes, but unfairly, called Semi-Arians  
the Son is "of like substance (or essence)" with the Father  
Basil of Ancyra
4. Neo-Nicenes (homoousios)  
the Son is "of the same substance (or essence)" with the Father; also, "of the ousia of the Father"  
Cappadocians: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa

#### Kelly

1. Anomoeans  
Second Creed of Sirmium (357) (Ursacius, Valens)  
Acacius of Antioch and Homoeans
2. Conservative "middle party"  
Father, Son, and Spirit are three  
divine hypostaseis or prospopa, "separate in rank and glory but united in harmony of will"  
Dedication or Second Creed of Antioch (341)  
Creed of Philippopolis (343)  
"Long-lined Creed" of 345
3. Homoeousians  
Meletius of Antioch, Cyril of Jerusalem  
Basil of Ancyra  
Creed of Ancyra (358)  
Memorandum of George of Laodicea (359)
4. Nicenes  
Creed of Serdica (343)  
Synod of Alexandria (362) and Athanasius  
Cappadocians

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSY:  
THE QUESTION OF THE INCARNATION

1. The Major Councils of the Early Church: What each rejected

<u>Date</u>	<u>Council</u>	<u>View rejected</u>
325	Nicaea	Arianism
381	I Constantinople	Arianism, Apollinarianism
431	Ephesus	Nestorianism
451	Chalcedon	Eutychianism, Nestorianism, Apollinarianism
553	II Constantinople	Monophysitism
681	III Constantinople	Monothelitism

2. Christology from Nicaea to Chalcedon

- 2.1. The contribution of Nicaea

The pre-existent Son is true God, homoousious as the Father.

- 2.2. Alexandrian vs. Antiochene Christology

- 2.2.1. Logos-sarx (word-flesh) vs. logos-anthropos (word-man)

- 2.2.1.1. logos-sarx Christology (Alexandrian Christology)  
Jesus = Logos + flesh (unity emphasized,  
humanity de-emphasized).

Athanasius (ca. 296-373). Bishop of Alexandria.

Apollinarius (ca. 310-ca.390). Bishop of Laodicea;  
friend of Athanasius.

- 2.2.1.2. logos-anthropos Christology (Antiochene Christology)  
 Jesus = Logos + complete humanity (humanity emphasized, unity de-emphasized).

Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350-428).  
 Antiochene theologian and Biblical exegete.  
 Became Bishop of Mopsuestia in 392.

Nestorius (d. ca. 451. Antiochene monk.  
 Probably studied under Theodore of Mopsuestia.  
 Became Bishop of Constantinople.

Nestorius attacked Cyril of Alexandria's teaching concerning Mary as theotokos ("God bearer" or "mother of God")

- 2.2.2. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444). Bishop of Alexandria.

Cyril's proclamation:

"He who does not confess that the Logos came forth from God the Father to unite himself hypostastically with flesh, to form with flesh one Christ, God and man, he shall be damned."

- 2.2.3. Council of Ephesus (431)

- 2.2.4. Formula of Reunion (433)



### 3. Background to Chalcedon:

- 3.1. Eutyches (ca. 378-454). Head of a large monastery in Constantinople was excommunicated and deposed.

"What Eutyches's actual doctrine was has never been easy to determine. . . . He declared that 'after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ I worship one nature, viz. that of God made flesh and become man'. He vigorously repudiated the suggestion of two natures in the Incarnate as un-Scriptural and contrary to the teaching of the fathers. Yet he expressly allowed that He was born from the Virgin and was at once perfect God and perfect man. He denied ever having said that His flesh came from heaven, but refused to concede that it was consubstantial with us. . . . The traditional picture of Eutyches, it is clear, has been formed by picking out certain of his statements and pressing them to their logical conclusion. . . . In fact he seems to have been a confused and unskilled thinker . . . blindly rushing forward to defend the unity of Christ against all attempts to divide Him." - J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines.

### 3.2. Roman Christology

- 3.2.1. Leo I (the Great) (d. 461). Bishop of Rome wrote a letter (Tome) approving of the excommunication of Eutyches.

#### 3.2.2. The Tome of Leo

- Two natures (permanently distinct).
- United in one person.
- Redemption requires a mediator who is human and divine, mortal and immortal.
- The humanity of Christ is permanent.

### 3.3. Council of Ephesus (449) - "the Robber Synod"

#### 4. Council of Chalcedon (451)

##### 4.1. What it condemned:

##### 4.2. Three correctives to false views:

Tome of Leo

Second Letter of Cyril to Nestorius

Letter of Cyril accepting the Formula of Reunion

##### 4.3. New definition:

"Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and also in human-ness; this selfsame one is also actually God and actually man, with a rational soul and a body. He is of the same reality [homoousion] as we are ourselves as far as his human-ness is concerned; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before time began he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and now in these 'last days,' for us and on behalf of our salvation, this selfsame one was born of Mary the virgin, who is God-bearer [theotokos] in respect of his human-ness.

[We also teach] that we apprehend this one and only Christ--Son, Lord, only-begotten--in two natures; without confusing the two natures, without transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into two separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or function. The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead, the "properties" of each nature are conserved and both natures concur in one "person" [prosopon] and in one hypostasis. They are not divided or cut into two prosopa, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Logos of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus have the prophets of old testified; thus the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us; thus the Symbol of the Fathers has handed down to us."

## 5. Christology after Chalcedon

- 5.1. The Monophysite Controversy - a revival of the controversy over whether there was only one nature in the incarnate Christ.

Second Council of Constantinople (553) condemned Monophysitism.

- 5.2. The Monothelite Controversy - a controversy over whether there was only one will in the incarnate Christ.

Third Council of Constantinople (681) condemned Monothelitism.

## IV. SYMBOLUM QUICUNCQUE.

## THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

## THE LATIN ORIGINAL.

1. *Quicumque vult salvus esse: ante omnia opus est, ut teneat catholicam fidem.*  
 2. *Quam nisi quisque integrum inviolatamque servaverit: absque dubio in æternum peribit.*

3. *Fides autem catholica hæc est: ut unum Deum in Trinitate, et Trinitatem in Unitate veneremur; 4. Neque confundentes personas: neque substantiam separantes.*

5. *Alia est enim persona Patris: alia Filii: alia Spiritus Sancti.*  
 6. *Sed Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti una est divinitas: æqualis gloria, coætærna majestates.*

7. *Qualis Pater: talis Filius: talis [et] Spiritus Sanctus.*

8. *Increatus Pater: increatus Filius: increatus [et] Spiritus Sanctus.*

9. *Immensus Pater: immensus Filius: immensus [et] Spiritus Sanctus.*

## OLD TRANSLATION REVISED.

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 [Essence].

5. For there is one Person of the Father: another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.

6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal.

7. Such as the Father is: such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost.

8. The Father uncreate [uncreated]: the Son uncreate [uncreated]: and the Holy Ghost uncreate [uncreated].

9. The Father incomprehensible [unlimited]: the Son incomprehensible [unlimited]: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible [unlimited, or infinite].

## THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

10. *Æternus Pater: æternus Filius: æternus [et] Spiritus Sanctus.*

11. *Et tamen non tres æterni: sed unus æternus.*

12. *Sicut non tres increati: nec tres immensi: sed unus increatus: et unus immensus.*

13. *Similiter omnipotens Pater: omnipotens Filius: omnipotens [et] Spiritus Sanctus.*

14. *Et tamen non tres omnipotentes: sed unus omnipotens.*

15. *Ita deus Pater: deus Filius: deus [et] Spiritus Sanctus.*

16. *Et tamen non tres dii: sed unus est Deus.*

17. *Ita dominus Pater: dominus Filius: dominus [et] Spiritus Sanctus.*

18. *Et tamen non tres domini: sed unus [est] Dominus.*

19. *Quia sicut singularem unamquamque personam Deum ac Dominum confiteri, christiana veritate compellimur:*

20. *Ita tres deos, aut [tres] dominos dicere, catholica religione prohibemur.*

21. *Pater a nullo est factus: nec creatus, nec genitus.*

22. *Filius a Patre solo est: non factus, nec creatus: sed genitus.*

10. The Father eternal: the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal.

11. And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal.

12. As also there are not three uncreated: nor three incomprehensibles [infinities], but one uncreated: and one incomprehensible [finite].

13. So likewise the Father is Almighty: the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty.

14. And yet they are not three Almighties: but one Almighty.

15. So the Father is God: the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God.

16. And yet they are not three Gods: but one God.

17. So likewise the Father is Lord: the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord.

18. And yet not three Lords: but one Lord.

19. For like as 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 be [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. *Spiritus Sanctus a Patre et Filio: non factus, nec creatus, nec genitus: sed procedens.*
24. *Unus ergo Pater, non tres patres: unus Filius, non tres filii: unus Spiritus Sanctus, non tres spiritus sancti.*
25. *Et in hac Trinitate nihil prius, aut posterius: nihil majus, aut minus.*
26. *Sed totæ tres personæ coæternæ sibi sunt, et coæquales.*
27. *Ita, ut per omnia, sicut jam supra dictum est: et Unitas in Trinitate, et Trinitas in Unitate, veneranda sit.*
28. *Qui vult ergo saluus esse, ita de Trinitate sentiat.*
29. *Sed necessarium est ad eternam salutem: ut incarnationem quoque Domini nostri Jesu Christi fideliter credat.*
30. *Est ergo fides recta, ut credamus et confiteamur: quod Dominus noster Jesus Christus Dei Filius, Deus [pariter] et homo est; 31. Deus [est] ex substantia Patris, ante secula genitus: et homo ex substantia matris, in seculo natus.*
32. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding.
33. So there is one Father, not three Fathers: one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.
34. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another: none is greater, or less than another [there is nothing before, or after: nothing greater or less].
35. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal.
36. So that in all things, as aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshiped.
37. He therefore that will be saved, must [let him] thus think of the Trinity.
38. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly [faithfully] the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
39. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;
40. God, of the Substance [Essence] of the Father; begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance [Essence] of his Mother, born in the world.

32. *Perfectus Deus: perfectus homo, ex anima rationali: et humana carne subsistens.*
33. *Aequalis Patri secundum divinitatem: minor Patri secundum humanitatem.*
34. *Qui licet Deus sit et homo; non duo tamen, sed unus est Christus.*
35. *Unus autem, non conversione divinitatis in carnem: sed assumptione humanitatis in Deum.*
36. *Unus omnino; non confusione substantiæ: sed unitate personæ.*
37. *Nam sicut anima rationalis et caro unus est homo: ita Deus et homo unus est Christus.*
38. *Qui passus est pro nostra salute: descendit ad inferos: tertio die resurrexit a mortuis.*
39. *Ascendit ad [in] caelos: sed ad dexteram [Dei] Patris [omnipotentis].*
40. *Inde venturus [est] judicare vivos et mortuos.*
41. *Ad cujus adventum omnes homines resurgere habent cum corporibus suis;*
42. *Et redditori sunt de factis propriis rationem.*
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 [is] God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ.
35. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking [assumption] of the Manhood into God.
36. One altogether; not by confusion of Substance [Essence]: 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 [Hades, spirit-world]: rose again the third day from the dead.
39. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father God [God the Father] Almighty.
40. From whence [thence] 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. *Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam eternam: qui vero mala, in ignem eternum.*

44. *Hæc est fides catholica: quam nisi quisque fideliter firmiterque crediderit, saluus esse non poterit.*

## NOTES.

<sup>1</sup> The LATIN text of the oldest known MS. in the Utrecht Psalter has been reproduced by Sir Thomas Duffus Hardy in his Report (London, 1873), and in the fac-simile ed. of the Utrecht Psalter (1875). It agrees nearly altogether with the text given above, but has a number of inaccuracies. I have compared also the texts of Waterland (*Works*, Vol. III. pp. 221 sqq.), Usher (*De Romana Eccles. veter.*, 1647, Genæv. ed. 1722, pp. 13-15), Montfaucou (*De Romana Eccles. Symbolo Apost. veter.*, 1647, Genæv. ed. 1722, pp. 13-15), Lumby (p. 269), and Swinson (p. 204). The numbering of verses differs: Waterland, Montfaucou, and the English Book of Common Prayer have only 40 verses by combining 19 and 20, 25 and 26, 39 and 40, 41 and 42; Walch and others make 44, the Roman Breviary 42. In my *Church Hist.* Vol. III. pp. 680-695, I have given the parallel passages from the fathers.

<sup>2</sup> There is no authorized Greek text of the Athanasian Creed, since it was never adopted in the Oriental Church. There are several translations, which differ considerably. Usher gives a Greek version with many interpolations. Caspari (Vol. III. pp. 263-267) published for the first time two other Greek versions from MSS. in the Venetian Library of St. Mark and the Ambrosian Library of Milan.

<sup>3</sup> The English translation is that of the sixteenth century (1548), as found in the English editions of the *Book of Common Prayer*, and still in use in the public service of the Church of England. My emendations are inclosed in brackets. The punctuation is adjusted to the liturgical use of this Creed.

Ver. 1.—Some copies read *opus habet for opus est*. Usher: *τὴν ὁσιόδοκον πίστιν, ὀρθόδοξαν fidem*. The MS. in the Utrecht Psalter begins with a grammatical blunder: 'Incipit fides catholicam.'

Ver. 2.—On the damatory clause, which is twice repeated, ver. 28 and ver. 44, see the *Introduction*, pp. 39, 41. Some MSS. read *inviolableness*; some omit *absque dubio*.

Ver. 3.—Usher: *Orthodoxa for catholica*. Compare on this verse Gregory Naz., *Orat.* xliii.: *μονάδα ἐν τριάδι, καὶ τριάδα ἐν μονάδι, προσκυνοῦμεν*.

Ver. 4.—*Person* in the sense of *persona*, *πρόσωπον* (also *ὑπόστασις* in the post-Nicene use of the term), i. e., *character, face, manifestation, subsistence*. It must not be confounded with *essence* or *being* (*essentia, substantia, natura, οὐσία, φύσις*). God is one in essence, three in persons (*Deus est trinus, h. e. in essentia unus, tres habet substantiæ modos*). In modern philosophical usage the term *person* means a separate and distinct rational individual. But the trinity of God is not a numerical or essential trinity of three beings (like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), for this would be tritheism; nor is it, on the other hand, merely a threefold aspect and mode of manifestation, in the Sabellian or Swedenborgian sense; <sup>1</sup> but it is a real, objective, and eternal, though ineffable, distinction in the one Divine being, with a corresponding threefold revelation of this being in the works of creation, redemption, and sanctification.

<sup>1</sup> Swedenborg was willing to adopt the Athanasian Creed if a trinity of (the one Divine) *person* was substituted for a trinity of *persons*. According to him, the Father is the Essential Divinity, the Son the Divine Humanity, the Holy Spirit the Divine Proceeding or Operation.

Hence the distinction between the immanent, intrinsic (or ontological) trinity and the extrinsic (or economical) trinity; in other words, between the trinity of essence and the trinity of manifestation.

Ver. 4.—The Latin *substantia* (that which stands under) and *essentia* correspond to the Greek *oûsia*, as distinct from *πρόσωπον*. But in modern English, *substance* is used mostly in the sense of matter, body, or the most important part, summary. Hence *essence* or *being* is preferable. *Hypostasis* (*ὑπόστασις*, foundation, groundwork, *substratum, substantia*) was originally used in the same sense as *oûsia*, but afterwards it became identical with *prosopon, persona*.

Ver. 6.—Usher reads after *divinitas*: '*Unum robur, una potestas, unum regnum*' (an interpolation of the Greeks).

Ver. 9.—*Incomprehensible* is a false translation, unless it be taken in the unusual sense, 'not to be comprehended within any bounds.' The Anglican translator of 1548 perhaps followed a Greek copy (of 1538) which renders *immenus* by *ἀεὶ ἀνέστητος*. But other Greek copies read *ἀνέστος* or *ἀνέστητος*. Usher's Greek text has *παντοκράτωρ, omnipotens*. The Latin *immensus* means, what can not be circumscribed or limited by any boundaries, what is illocal, omnipresent. Fortunatus explains the word: '*Non est mensurabilis in sua natura, quia illocalis est, incircumscriptus, ubique totus, ubique præsens, ubique potens*.' The author of the Athanasian Creed glories in the clear revelation and statement of the mystery of the Trinity rather than in the mystery itself. The Utrecht Psalter reads *immensus*.

Ver. 20.—Waterland omits *tres* before *Dominos*. Usher reads for *prohibemur*: '*Non comprobamur, sed omnino prohibemur*.'

Ver. 21.—Usher: *sed ingentis for nec genitus*.

Ver. 23.—The Greek translation and the Latin text in Usher omit *et Filio*, which is contrary to the Greek doctrine of the single procession. Most Greek copies read only *ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς*.

Ver. 26.—Usher: *nullus primus aut postremus, nullus major aut minor, οὐδὲς πρῶτος ἢ ἔσχατος, οὐδὲς πῦας ἢ μικρός*.

Ver. 29.—*Fideliter* is variously rendered in the Greek copies by *ἀρθεῖς, πιστῶς, βεβαίως*.

Ver. 30.—Utrecht Psalter reads *quia for quod*, and omits *pariter*.

Ver. 31.—Usher's Greek text inserts here a long interpolation, which is not at all in keeping with the sententious character of the symbol.

Ver. 32.—Another long interpolation in Usher.

Ver. 38.—After *passus est* a Greek version adds the anti-patristic clause: *ἀπαθούς τῆς σκώτητος μυνούσης, impassibilis manente divinitate*.

Ver. 38.—Some MSS. read *ad infernos* or *ad inferna*. Usher's enlarged Greek copy omits the clause, and reads *κατὰ καὶ ἀναστὰς*. The Utrecht Psalter reads *et qui for qui vero*.

Ver. 43.—Usher: *εἰς αἰωνίους κολάσεις, ad cruciatus eternos*.

Ver. 44.—The Greek copies read either *πιστῶς* alone, or *πιστῶς τε καὶ βεβαίως, or πιστῶς βεβαίως πιστῶς*.

## PERSON OF CHRIST

Ecumenical Councils [Dealt with orthodoxy and established it in relation to the Trinity and Christology] -- subtitle under Ecumenical Councils

- I. Nicea (325) - Declared the Son homousios (same essence) with the Father (Arian heresy)
- II. Constantinople (381) - Confirmed Nicea and concluded Arian controversy. Reworded Nicene Creed to also refute Apollinarianism.

Apollanarius - Man 3 parts; in Christ divine logos replaced the spirit

- III. Ephesus (431) - Rejected Nestorius (2 persons in one body) and endorse the Alexandrian view of the relationship between the 2 nature of Christ.

Nestorius - Rejected theotokos - "God bearer" for Mary. Preferred Christokos - "Christ bearer". Saw in Christ two people, personalities in one being.

\* Robbers Synod (449) - Approved the contention of Eutyches that after the incarnation Christ had only one nature and it was divine. Called by the bishop of Alexandria, Dioscorus.

- IV. Chalcedon (451) - Completed discussion of the relationship between the two natures of Christ with the words unmixed, unchanged, unseparated, undivided.

condemned Eutyches

Leo's Tome - Formula defining the relation of the 2 natures of Christ.

Eutyches - Before incarnation 2 natures, which became 1. fusing of the two natures resulting in a new 3rd something

ONE PERSON WITH FULLY DIVINE NATURE  
FULLY HUMAN NATURE

WITHOUT MIXTURE

WITHOUT CHANGE

WITHOUT DIVISION

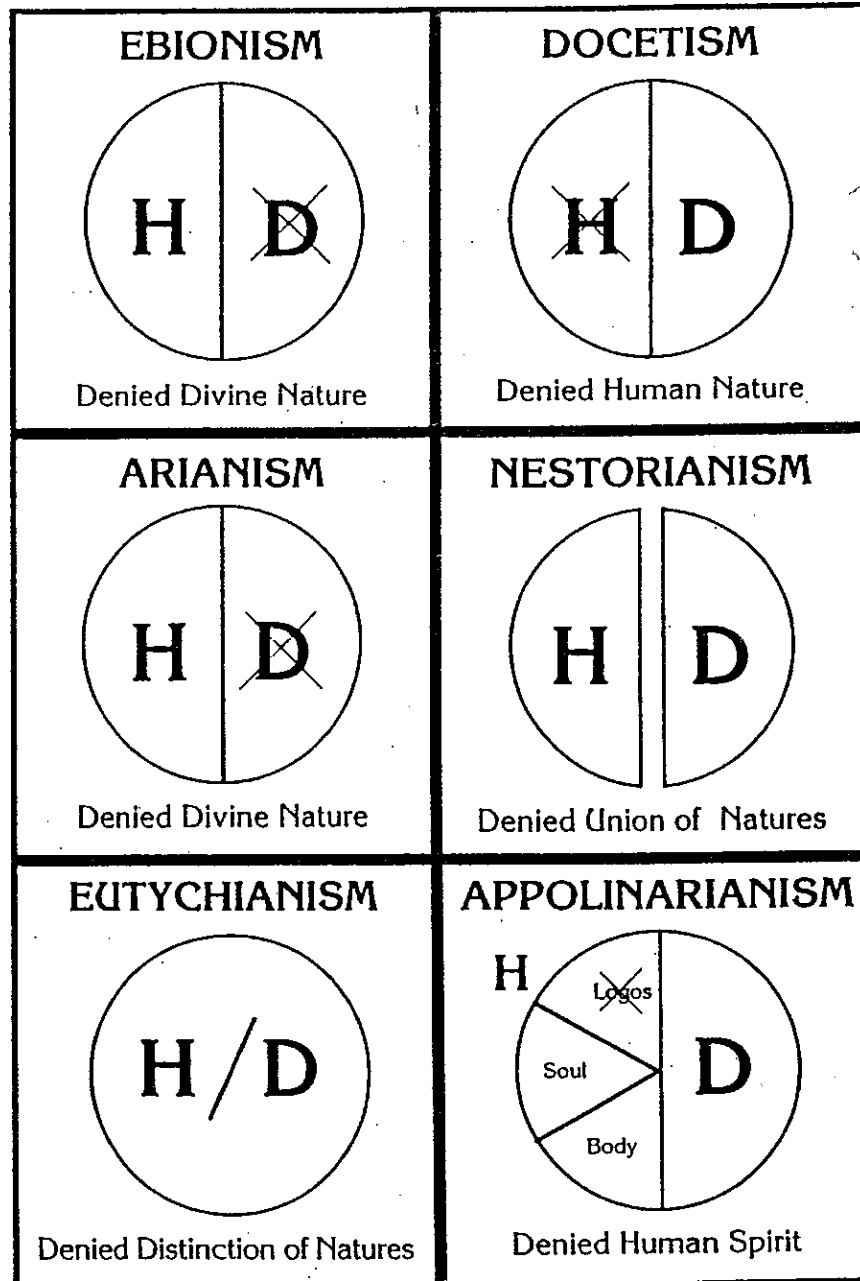
WITHOUT SEPARATION

HYPOSTATIC UNION

CHALCEDON

451

## False Views of the Person of Christ



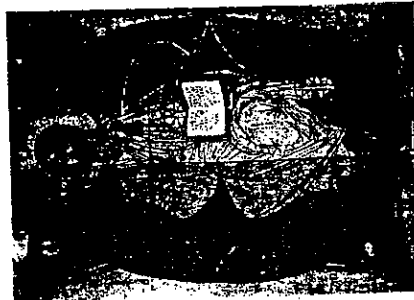


CHRISTOLOGY IN THE CHURCH COUNCILS		
the resolution of trinitarian relationships and the hypostatic union of Christ		
ERROR AGAINST DEITY	CHURCH POSITION	ERRORS AGAINST HUMANITY
Arius - Christ is a created being	<u>Nicea</u> , 325 - Christ is eternal and truly God	
	<u>Constantinople</u> , 381 - full manhood of Christ is affirmed	Apollinarius - dominant logos over the humanity
Nestorius - Christ is two natures in a mechanical union	<u>Ephesus</u> , 431 - unity of Christ's personality is affirmed	
	<u>Chalcedon</u> , 451 - orthodox Christology established: two natures in one person	Eutyches - divine nature swallows up the human nature

# THE COUNSELS OF CHRIST

The Orthodox believe Jesus' voice can still be heard in the seven ecumenical councils.

✠ STANLEY SAMUEL HARAKAS



ICON OF CHRIST IN GLORY

Jesus Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the church "into all truth" (John 16:13). According to the Orthodox, this promise finds its most complete fulfillment in the ecumenical councils.

At ecumenical (from the Greek word for "worldwide") councils, bishops and clergy from across the church gathered to produce two types of rulings. Canons deal with administrative matters and can be changed by later councils. *Horoi*, doctrinal formulations, cannot; they permanently express authentic Orthodox teaching.

Through the centuries, Orthodox leaders have gathered in dozens of councils to discuss doctrine and practice. But the Orthodox believe there have been only seven truly *ecumenical* councils. Here are the main theological teachings and some sample canons passed by each council.

## 1. Nicaea (325)

- 318 bishops
- Opposed the teaching of Arius by affirming that Jesus Christ is fully divine.

Issued the first version of the Nicene Creed.

- Passed 85 canons: Rome is the first see of Christendom; various restrictions are to be placed on Christians who denied the faith under persecution; prayer should be offered standing.

## 3. Ephesus (431)

- 200 bishops
- Rejected the teaching of Nestorius, affirming that Jesus Christ was one person with two natures.
- Declared Mary the *Theotokos*, "Birthgiver of God."
- Passed eight canons: bishops deposed by Nestorian bishops are to be

## 2. Constantinople (381)

- 150 bishops
- Affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit, thus formulating the doctrine of the Holy Trinity: One God in three persons (*hypostases*), Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Completed final version of Nicene Creed (also called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed).
- Passed seven canons: bishops should not interfere in matters of other dioceses; the bishop of Constantinople is second only to Rome.

Completed final version of Nicene Creed (also called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed).

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

## THE SEVEN ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

	PLACE	DATE	OUTCOME
1st	Nicaea	325	Refuted Arianism. Adopted Nicene creed: Jesus is coeternal with the Father.
2nd	Constantinople	381	Condemned Apollinarian view that Jesus had no human will. Affirmed the deity of the Holy Spirit.
3rd	Ephesus	431	Condemned Pelagius' claim that man is not totally fallen; Declared Nestorianism heretical; i.e. that Jesus is two persons.
4th	Chalcedon	451	Condemned Monophysite heresy that Jesus can't have two natures in one person.
5th	Constantinople	553	Condemned Theodore of Mopseustia's and other writings as Nestorian
6th	Constantinople	680	Denied Monothelitism ("one will"). Said instead that Christ had both divine and human wills.
7th	Nicaea	787	Legitimized veneration of icons.

**CANON COMMENTARY.** The Council of Nicaea (325). Councils determined not only weighty theological matters (Jesus is God from God), but made canons, or rulings, on more mundane matters, like whether clergy could lend money at interest (no). Later Orthodox writers made commentaries on these canons to interpret their significance for later generations. These commentaries are given great weight in guiding Orthodox churches to this day.

reinstituted; it is forbidden to alter the Nicene Creed.

## 4. Chalcedon (451)

- 630 bishops
- Opposed monophysite views, which held that the divine nature of Jesus Christ overwhelmed his human nature. Taught that the divine and human in Christ were united without confusion, change, division, or separation.
- Passed 30 canons: clergy and monks forbidden from involvement in business or the military; women cannot be ordained; deaconesses before the age of 40; priests and deacons are not permitted to seize the material goods of their bishop once he dies.

affirmed the teachings of the previous ecumenical councils regarding Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

- No canons passed.

## 6. Constantinople III (680)

- 170 bishops
- Opposed the monothelite (single divine will) teaching about Christ, and affirmed that Jesus Christ had both full human and divine wills, united harmoniously under the leadership of the divine will.
- No canons passed.

thus the name.

- Passed 102 canons: obligatory clerical celibacy condemned; Saturday fasting during Lent forbidden.

## 7. Nicaea II (787)

- 367 bishops
- Held in the midst of the more-than-century-long icon controversy (725-842). Concluded that only God can be worshiped, but icons can be honored as a means of expressing devotion to what was depicted in them.
- Passed 22 canons: bishops, priests, and deacons cannot be appointed by secular authorities; women cannot stay in bishops' houses or men's monasteries.

## 5. & 6. Quinisext Council (692)

- 327 bishops

Also known as the Council in Trullo because it was held in the trullus, or domed room of the emperor's palace in Constantinople.

- It is viewed as an extension of the Fifth-Sixth Ecumenical Councils,

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**Title:** "Perspectives in Contemporary Christology"  
(As summarized in The Present-Day Christological Debate)

**Author:** Klaus Runia  
Professor of Practical Theology, Reformed  
Theological Seminary, Kampen, The Netherlands

## I. Western (primarily European) Developments

The Great battle was fought in the ancient church:

Nicea 325 (homousios issue)  
Constantinople 381  
Ephesus 431  
Chalcedon 451 (Christ's two natures are united in  
one person: without confusion, change, division,  
separation)

Jesus Christ is very God and very man. The Creeds though inadequate, are sufficient parameters. This was universally accepted by the church as the orthodox/biblical position until the modern era. Three criticism of historic Christology have arisen:

- (1) Modern historical-critical exegesis has revealed a plurality of Christologies in the N.T.
- (2) The Creeds are infected with Greek philosophical language and contaminated by the metaphysical modes of thinking of that period.
- (3) Ancient Creeds are meaningless for modern man. We no longer think primarily in ontological categories, but modern thinking is functional and existential. This is where we are as we approach the 21st century.

## II. Karl Barth

- Reacted against classic liberalism
- Affirmed the Christology of the Creeds
- Jesus is the elect God-man of God
- Barth is so Christocentric he has been accused of Christomonism
- He affirms the use of two 6th century terms:
  - (a) anhypostatos - the human nature of Christ had no separate hypostasis of its own, that is, it did not exist apart from the Son of God who assumed the human nature.

- (b) enhypostatos - from its very beginning the Logos was the hypostasis of the human nature.

- Christ is the Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness of God
- God is ontologically and essentially Triune, not just Functionally
- Barth comes close to theopaschitism in speaking of God's self-surrender and self-sacrifice.

\*Barth has an orthodox Christology.

### III. Radical Developments

#### (A) Rudolph Bultmann

- Existential N.T. scholar at University of Marburg
- Greatly influenced by the existential/ontological method of Martin Heidegger (Being and Time)
- Demythologized the N.T. Remove the legendary/supernatural elements via form critical analysis. What remains is the kernel of existential truth.
- Accepted much from religious history school of thought (Christianity borrowed from those around it). "We can, strictly speaking, know nothing of the personality of Jesus." Historical Jesus is not essential to the kerygma.
- Two fold background to "Son of God" title:
  - (a) Primitive Palestinian - Messiah, eschatological bringer of salvation.
  - (b) Hellenistic - Jesus is a divine figure, perhaps a gnostic-redeemer.
- Basically reduces theology to anthropology. Theological knowledge is knowledge about ourselves.
- N.T. is full of mythology, expressing the culturally conditioned 3 - story universe of angels, demons, etc., of 1st century man. All of this supernaturalism is unacceptable to modern man.
- Bultmann does not eliminate the myths as did older liberalism, but re-interprets the myth for our age, via existential categories. (In mythological language Christ is from eternity, in ordinary language this normal human is where the salvation of God is present, in theological language Christ is the great eschatological event).

\* Bultmann rejects the Christ of the Creeds.

(B) After Bultmann

- Bultmann began a new development in Christology.
- John Robinson and Paul Tillich demythed God. We transcend ourselves and find God within not up!
- Some opted for the God is Dead movement.

(C) Quest for the Historical Jesus

- Lessing and Reimarus (1694-1788): Synoptics vs Paul/John
- Adolf Harnack - God as loving Father of all mankind.
- Schweitzer brought an end to the Quest of liberalism, said they saw themselves in the Quest.

(D) The New Quest

- Ernst Kasemann - disciple of Bultmann, accused his teacher of docetism. Historical knowledge of Jesus though difficult, is possible (also Ebeling, Fuchs, Van Buren). Christ's unique self-understanding was the basis for the later apostolic Christ - Kerygma, although this Kerygma is something new compared with the preaching of Jesus himself.
- All emphasize the importance of the resurrection, though they are vague concerning its history (really skeptical).
- Though an improvement on Bultmann, this movement is still biblically inadequate and theologically insufficient.

IV Pannenberg and Moltmann(A) Wolfhart Pannenberg - wrote Jesus: God and Man

- (1) We must go behind the straightforward incarnational approach of traditional Christology.
- (2) We must acknowledge we live after the Enlightenment.
- (3) We work from a "Christology from below."
  - (a) "Christology from above" presupposes the divinity of Jesus
  - (b) "Christology from above" makes it difficult to recognize the distinctive features of the real historical man, Jesus of Nazareth

- (c) It adopts the position of God himself by concentrating upon the way God's Son came into the world
- (d) Jesus is God's Son, but in agreement with post-Bultmannians, he says we can and must go back behind the apostolic Kerygma (Christology from above) to the historical Jesus (Christology from below).
  - (1) Jesus expected the end of history
  - (2) There is a proleptic element to Christ's expectation and claim
  - (3) The resurrection is the proleptic anticipation of the end
  - (4) Christology is decidedly eschatological
  - (5) Virgin birth is legend?!
  - (6) Christ's pre-existence is true.
  - (7) Pannenberg prefers to speak of Christ's two "complementary aspects" instead of natures

### Evaluation

- (1) Pannenberg holds to a variant Chalcedonian tradition
  - (2) Pannenberg takes the historical Jesus seriously
  - (3) Pannenberg uses historical-critical method in a subjective and arbitrary manner to shape data to fit his scheme
  - (4) He comes close to a form of anthropological deification or pantheism in saying the integration of the human and divine in Christ will ultimately extend to all of human reality
- (A) Jurgen Moltmann - wrote The Crucified God, written against the background of the atheism of the God-is-dead theology
- (1) Wants a theological crucis (theology of the cross)

- (2) Wants to answer the desperate cries of a suffering and dying humanity (post WWII context)
- (3) God is revealed in the cross of Christ who is abandoned by God
- (4) God can only be known in the guise of opposition (dialectical methodology)
- (5) We meet God at the place where He raised the Son He crucified! (This is no patricipassianism)
- (6) Moltmann affirms patricipassianism, i.e. He, Father suffered with the Son (A death in God).

### Evaluation

Moltmann:

- (1) Takes the reality of suffering and death seriously
- (2) Comes close to pantheism or panentheism
- (3) Interest in the cross diminishes the rightful place of the resurrection
- (4) Does his Hegalian framework mar his analysis?
- (5) Affirmation of Chalcedon is at best uncertain

## V Roman Abandonment of Chalcedon

H. Berkhof mentions three objections to the solution of Chalcedon.

- (1) The doctrine of the Trinity here moves in the direction of tri-theism.
- (2) The historical Jesus, conceived an-hypostatically, begins to look alarmingly like God dressed up as man, or like a composite being: half God and half man.
- (3) The speculative doctrine of *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* cannot be a part of the church's proclamation. For all these reasons we have to look for an alternative solution.

### (A) Piet Schoonenberg - wrote He Is A God Of Men

- (1) Jesus is a unity in himself.

- (2) Jesus is a real man. Yet He is different from us because of His unique relationship to God.
- (3) He rejects Chalcedon. In Christology we should not operate with the formula "God and man", but we should speak of "God in man".
- (4) Pre-existent text should be re-interpreted.
- (5) In Jesus Christ the whole man is penetrated by God's presence. Jesus is the "eschatological man".
- (6) He affirms a "presence-Christology".
- (7) God became a trinity of sorts at the incarnation. God is Triune ontologically but not eternally. This is a Trinity of becoming (process).

(B) Edward Schillebeeckx

He published two large and important studies on Christology:

- (1) *Jesus, An Experiment in Christology*
- (2) *The Christian Experience in the Modern World*

People have difficulty in accepting the "Christ of the Church".

He decide's to look critically into the intelligibility for man of Christological belief in Jesus, especially in its origin.

In the first volume he accordingly sets out on the quest for the historical Jesus. In the New Testament itself the historical Jesus is overlaid with many layers of interpretation; but by means of the historical-critical methods it is possible to arrive at the picture of Jesus as he met with and was seen by his own contemporaries.

We first of all discover that the heart of Jesus' message was the preaching of the kingdom of God. Jesus' original *Abba*-experience is the source and secret of his being, message and manner of life. After Jesus' death something unexpected and altogether new happened. His disciples had an experience of forgiveness, which they expressed in categories of resurrection. Jesus' appearances were seen as interpretations of conversion and mission experiences.

Who, then, is Jesus himself? He is the latter-day messenger of God, the eschatological prophet who is greater than Moses and who offers God's salvation to us.



He vigorously maintains Jesus' humanity. On the other hand, he speaks of Jesus' humanity as a humanity in which "being a Father" is realized. It is a real humanity, but at the same time the centre of Jesus' being-as-man was vested not in himself but in God the Father. Schillebeeckx comes to a full-fledged doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus reveals to us "three persons" in God:

- (1) Father
- (2) Jesus Christ
- (3) Pneuma

This is not only an economic but a really essential Trinity.

Yet, Schillebeeckx emphatically states that nowhere in his book does he say that God can be called "three persons" before the appearance of Jesus. We cannot speak of the Trinity in separation from the Christological interpretation of Jesus.

Whether Schillebeeckx ultimately arrives at the classical Christology is also doubtful. He does not go beyond a functional, revelational Christology. He makes two complementary statements about Jesus:

- (1) He is the decisive and definitive revelation of God
- (2) In being this he also shows us what we humans can be and should be.

This historical Jesus whom Schillebeeckx claims to have found is the result of his own research; and that, in turn, is determined by his own starting-point, namely, that we have to see Jesus' historical manifestation within the quite specific ongoing tradition in which he and his contemporaries were set: the horizon of experience which we now call the Old Testament and, even more specifically, its late Jewish or Judaistic context. From start to finish Schillebeeckx's historical Jesus is interpreted in categories of Jewish-functional theology. And since this historical Jesus is the final norm and criterion by which all later interpretations must be tested and checked, it is not surprising to see that the whole New Testament itself is also interpreted in functional categories. Concepts such as Son of God and pre-existence cannot be essential categories anymore. So the road to Nicea and Chalcedon is automatically blocked.

#### (C) Hans Kung

The same is true of the Christology of another famous Roman Catholic theologian, **Hans Kung**. Due to his conflict with Rome, he was dismissed as a teacher of Roman Catholic students in the University of Tübingen.

He wishes to be an apologist of the Christian faith. This means for him that we must abandon the old, medieval world picture and accept the picture that has arisen out of modern science.

He opts for a Christology, "from below". Who is Jesus? What did he want? The answer is to be found primarily in the Synoptic Gospels, which must be read in the light of modern historical criticism. Jesus himself did not assume any titles implying messianic dignity: not Messiah, nor Son of David, nor Son, nor Son of God. All these titles were given to Him afterwards by the Christian community. Yet, this man raises a stupendous claim: He demands from every one who meets Him "a final decision for God's cause and man's" and He asserts a "completely underived, supremely personal authority". This finally leads to His death on the cross. But His death is not the end. Shortly afterwards His disciples discover that "the Crucified lives".

We actually see several diverse Christologies emerge in the New Testament. Take, for instance, the title "Son of God". Originally this title "had nothing to do with Jesus's" origin but with his legal and authoritative status. It is a question of function, not of nature.

The *exaltation Christology* (i.e. the Christology "from below") was increasingly superseded by an *incarnation Christology* (i.e. a Christology "from above"). Strictly speaking we may find it only in the Gospel of John, but it cannot be denied that the idea also occurs in Pauline writings (Phil. 2:6-11; Gal. 4:4; II Cor. 8:9; Rom. 8:3; Tit. 2:11; 2:4). The ascendance Christology is replaced by a descendance Christology, leading to the idea of an ontological generation. For Hellenistic hearers "Son of God" becomes a pre-existent, superhuman being of divine origin and with divine power.

Kung clearly opts for a "functional Christology", as distinct from an "essence Christology". Jesus is "*God's word and will in human form*". The *true man* Jesus of Nazareth is for faith the real *revelation* of the one *true God*." Jesus is the Image, the Word, the Son of God. Pre-Existence, as attributed to Jesus, means that He has always been in God's thought. This is a functional Christology.

What does the *vere Deus* mean in Kung's conception? He gives the following interpretation:

The whole point of what happened in and with Jesus depends on the fact that, for believers, God himself as man's friend was present, at work, speaking, acting and definitely revealing himself in this Jesus who came among men as God's advocate and deputy, representative and delegate, and was confirmed by God as the Crucified raised to life. All statements about divine sonship, pre-existence, creation mediatorship and incarnation - often clothed in the mythological or semi-mythological forms of the time - are meant in the last resort to do no more and no less than substantiate the uniqueness, underivability and unsurpassability of the call, offer and claim made known in and with Jesus, ultimately not of human but of divine origin and therefore absolutely reliable, requiring men's unconditional involvement.

As to the *vere homo*, he says that Jesus was wholly and entirely man, a model of what it is to be human, representing the ultimate standard of human existence.

## Evaluation

Kung's Christology is a well-structured and consistent piece of theology. His decisive starting-point is the "historical Jesus" as "discovered" by modern historical-critical exegesis. This leads to a Christology "from below". At no stage is the idea of incarnation seen as the ultimate statement about who Jesus really is. Kung says the virgin birth is no more than an aetiological legend of saga.

Kung does not go beyond a functional Christology statement. Jesus is "the revelation of God's power and wisdom." In Kung's Christology ontological language is "functionalized".

But, this functional Christology requires further reflection; and, once reflective questions are asked about it, it appears to demand an essential Christology to back it up. Kung can escape this charge only by declaring that the maturer fruits of Christological reflection in the New Testament (pre-existence, incarnation, mediation in creation) belong to mythological ways of thought which must be discarded. But is this not a highly unscientific way of treating material that does not fit into one's own preconceived scheme?

## VI Chalcedon Abandoned: Protestant Theologians

In all the Christological concepts under review here, the results of the historical-critical exegesis of the New Testament, in particular the new quest for the "historical Jesus", appear to have given the impetus to a thoroughgoing reconsideration and reconstruction of the traditional Christology. Christology "from below" appears to be decisive.

### Ellen Flesseman

*Believing Today*, published in 1972, restates the Christian doctrines in the light of modern biblical exegesis and *en rapport* with contemporary thinking. She begins with the historical Jesus, but she also sees him strictly against the background of the Old Testament. Jesus is the true partner in the covenant that God established with Israel for the sake of the world.

The creeds make Jesus into a being that is both God and man. But this is impossible. She wants to drop the formula "God *and* man" from Christology and replace it by speaking of "God *in* man: God's presence *in* this man." The New Testament title "Son of God" must be interpreted as an indication of the exceptional relationship that existed between God and this man Jesus. In Him we are confronted with a man who realized the God-given destiny of humanity.

Flesseman cannot accept the doctrine of incarnation. She does not deny that this idea is present in the writings of Paul and John. But this concept is no longer suitable

for our day. It reminds us too much of all kinds of mythological stories. Flesseman, like all the other advocates of the new alternative Christology, differs sharply from the older liberal theologians in the tradition of Adolf von Harnack. For her Jesus is the Redeemer. He reconciled us with God. But in her opinion he was man, and no more.

Naturally, she can no longer hold to the doctrine of the Trinity either. "I cannot believe in a trinitarian God... The Son Jesus Christ is not God, but a man who was so one with God that in Him I meet God; and the Spirit is not an entity beside God the Father, but He is God Himself."

### John A.T. Robinson

*The Human Face of God*, published in 1973.

His real concern is existential. "My concern... is to a large extent with self-questioning - with how today one can truthfully and meaningfully say, 'Jesus is Lord'". He embarks on a new quest.

His basic starting-point: If Jesus as the Christ is to be our man, he must be one of us: *totus in nostris*, completely part of our world...; in other words, a man in every sense of the word. But this is only the starting-point. The order of the chapter headings indicates the path he follows: Our Man, A Man, The Man, Man of God, God's Man, God for Us, Man for All.

Robinson does not opt for a "low" Christology. He does not hesitate to say that God dwells in Christ as in a son and that this indwelling was by personal union and not just by intermittent grace.

However, Robinson opts for a functional approach. Following Cornelis van Peursen, he distinguishes two major shifts in the history of human thinking:

- (1) from myth to ontology
- (2) from ontology to functional thinking

These shifts can also be observed in the developments in Christology. First there was the transition from Jewish categories to Greek categories. In recent years we see a new shift from the ontological to the functional, which means that we must start from Jesus as "*this man*", a genuine product of the evolutionary process with all its random mutations.

Robinson naturally has no place for a doctrine of two natures united in the one divine Person. The "formula" he himself presupposes is that of:

"One human person of whom we must use two languages, man- language and

God-language. Jesus is wholly and completely a man, but a man who "speaks true" not simply of humanity but of God... He is a man who in all that He says and does as man is the personal representative of God: He stands in God's place, He is God to us and for us."

Robinson says only that we have to use two sets of language about the one man Jesus. In the one case we speak empirical language, which is natural, scientific and descriptive, and we say he is a man, just as we are. In the other case we use the language of faith, which is supernatural, mythological and interpretative, and we say: this man is God's personal representative - more than that, He is God to us and for us. This "double-talk" characterizes Robinson's whole Christology.

Robinson opts for a "degree Christology", that Jesus differs from us in degree only, not in essence.

### Hendrikus Berkhof

He wrote *The Christian Faith*.

Berkhof states that actually there are four possible approaches in the Christology:

- (1) From Behind - here we see Jesus in the line of redemptive history, i.e., in line with the Old Testament.
- (2) From Above - here we see how in Him the creative Word of God becomes a historical human life.
- (3) From Below - here we see Him as a human being within the framework of His own time.
- (4) From Before - here we see Him from the perspective of what He has worked out through the centuries. All four approaches are complementary.

Berkhof himself prefers to start with the approach "from below" (i.e., he starts off with the so-called historical Jesus).

In a summary he gives the following picture of the historical Jesus:

Jesus was...convinced that in his offer of grace the Kingdom itself was already present in a provisional form. This conviction rested on a most intimate relationship with God whom he, very intimately, addressed as "Father", and it manifested itself in a speaking with an unheard-of "authority", a declaring of God's will without an appeal to earlier authorities.

Whether Jesus used messianic titles for himself or not, one thing is clear: there

must have been in Him an "implicit Christology", on which the post-Easter community could build interpretatively. In fact, the closer we come to the actual situation, the more we realize that the secret of Jesus does not yield itself up, but becomes even more mysterious.

But who is He in himself? Is He God or man or both at the same time? Berkhof rejects the formula of both Nicea and Chalcedon. Jesus is "man, the perfected covenant man, the new man, the eschatological man." The New Testament nowhere pictures Him as a dual being. He is the new covenant man who lives in a thus far unknown oneness with God.

"There are...not two subjects in Jesus, but His human 'I' is, out of free will, fully and exhaustively permeated by the 'I' of God; and in virtue of this permeation He becomes the perfect instrument of the Father".

Berkhof cannot accept the decision of Chalcedon.

Berkhof has no place either for the idea of pre-existence in an ontological sense. The passages that seem to speak of it are all re-interpreted. They are in a mythical form of what today we would call "ideal pre-existence".

In a similar vein, the virgin birth is seen as a later embellishment of the tradition, which was used to indicate "that Jesus, the Son by pre-eminence, did not arise out of the empirical human world, but is a new creation which man cannot bring forth but only receive".

Nor is it any longer possible, of course to speak of a real incarnation.

This view also has far-reaching consequences for the doctrine of the **Trinity**. This doctrine too has to be re-interpreted. The three names, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, "do not constitute one being in eternity, but one history in time". The Trinity is an event, not in God, but arising from God and leading to him. The Father is the divine Partner, the Son is the human representative, the Spirit (who is God-in-relation) is the bond between Father and Son and therefore also between the Son and all the other sons whom he draws to the Father.

### Evaluation

Berkhof's view shows a remarkable degree of affinity with that of the other theologians discussed.

His own concept proves that historical investigation, which is characteristic of the approach "from below", is indeed unable to uncover the divine secret of Jesus Christ.

He describes Jesus as "the beginning from above". However, he always stops

short at calling Jesus God's Son in an ontological sense. There is in Jesus a divine secret, but it is not the secret of His own divinity!

Does this mean that Berkhof's concept, too, is no more than a functional Christology? In our cultural situation we cannot go back to the one-sided ontological mode of thought of years ago, but at the same time we must realize that a purely functionalistic way of thinking leads us nowhere. He wrote that "substance" and "function" belong together as "side and reverse-side" and therefore cannot be separated. Further on in the same article he put it thus: "The functionality of the new coventantal man is grounded in a ontological secret." This is the core of Berkhof's Christology. It is not merely functional. The relationship between Jesus and the Father is not only of a covenantal nature, but is based on a relationship of origin. Yet it cannot be denied either that throughout the entire section on Christology the real emphasis is on the function, and that the titles given to Jesus in the New Testament are primarily interpreted in a functional sense.

The real crux of the matter seems to be that Berkhof uses the New Testament data selectively. In the article from which he quoted before, he quite frankly admits that he replaces the Johannine *Logos*-model by a kind of *Pneuma*-model. According to him we cannot avoid a choice/selection, because the New Testament itself is so pluriform at this point.

### **The Debate About the Myth of God Incarnate**

In the late 1970's a debate on the incarnation started with the publication of the volume, *The Myth of God Incarnate*, (1977) by seven British theologians. It did not contain much that was new. In the same year an answer was given by a number of evangelical theologians in the small volume *The Truth of God Incarnate*.

In the common introduction to *The Myth of God Incarnate* the seven authors all are of the opinion that the doctrine of the incarnation, when taken as a description of factual truth, is no longer intelligible.

How then do the authors see Jesus? Jesus was "a man appointed by God" for a special role within the divine purpose, and that the later conception of him as God incarnate, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity living a human life, is "a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us."

Francis Young wishes to think of Jesus in two "models". The first one is the "scientific model", which finds explanations in terms of natural causes. The second one is the "mythological or symbolical model".

There is much repetition and little cohesion in the volume.

Although the term "myth" is used in the title of the book, there is no unanimity

among the authors as to its exact meaning.

The authors generally show a deep and unwarranted scepticism as to the historical reliability of the New Testament writings. Quite often the data are re-interpreted in such a way that little or nothing is left of the original meaning. It is striking that the resurrection of Christ plays hardly any role at all. John Hick explains it as "some kind of experience of seeing Jesus after his death". Michael Goulder explains it entirely psychologically. One cannot but agree with Ellen Flesseman when she comments that this interpretation by means of mass hysteria is at least as miraculous as the biblical interpretation!

The volume is also almost entirely silent about the soteriological significance of Jesus.

At some stage Frances Young admits that there are "incarnational elements" in the New Testament. She also admits that "there does not seem to be a single, exact analogy to the total Christian claim about Jesus in material which is definitely pre-Christian; full scale Redeemer-myths are unquestionably found AD but not BC". Yet she remains convinced that incarnational belief belongs naturally enough to a world that was accustomed to supernatural ways of speaking. The decisive point apparently is not that incarnational belief is absent from the New Testament, but that the authors cannot accept it on extra-biblical, i.e., philosophical grounds.

All authors admit that Jesus is someone very special and that he is indispensable to them. Frances Young says: I see God in Jesus, and Jesus will always be the unique focus of my perception of and response to God. Jesus stands for God. He is "as-if-God" for me. Michael Goulder believes in the unity of activity of God and Jesus, and Leslie Houlden speaks of the centrality of Jesus for all that concerns man's understanding of God. Yet they all refuse to speak of Him in absolute and exclusive terms. This is no longer possible, now that Jesus' metaphysical uniqueness has been given up. All that is left is a "functional" Christology, in which Jesus is seen as the main figure through whom God launched men into a relationship with himself so full and rich that under various understandings and formulations of it, it has been, and continues to be, the salvation of a large portion of the human race.

Consequently, most authors opt for a religious pluralism. Even when Jesus is seen as Savior, He is never more than one of the many saviours. As Frances Young puts it, "to claim that Jesus as the cosmic Christ has the same ultimate significance for all mankind irrespective of time, place or culture, is surely unrealistic". For this very reason John Hick rejects the doctrine of the incarnation, for it "implies that God can be adequately known and responded to only through Jesus" and that the large majority of the human race so far have not been saved. He himself believes that God's self-revelation can assume various forms. We do not have to convert the adherents of other religions. All we have to do is to share our mutual religious insights and ideals.



The greatest weakness of the volume under discussion, as John Macquarrie has pointed out, is that the authors are united only in their dissatisfaction with traditional doctrines of incarnation, but have no common reconstruction of belief to offer. Inevitable, therefore, the impression produced is negative and reductionist. The book does not really offer an alternative, but virtually revives the old liberal position of the nineteenth century.

### The Christology of Process Theology

Process theology takes its cue from the philosophies of Alfred N. Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. It proceeds on the assumption of a pan-en-theistic conception of God. God is operative in the whole creation, at every level of existence. Yet God is not identical with the creation. He is the unexhausted and unexhaustible Reality who works through all things, yet ever remains Himself.

Norman Pittenger describes Jesus Christ as the "focus" of the pervasive and universal activity of God. He is "the focal manifestation in man" of God in action. Rejecting the idea of a literal incarnation as "incredible and impossible", he opts for the idea that in Jesus the energizing and indwelling of God by mutual interpenetration of the divine and the human reaches a climactic stage.

In his book *Christology Reconsidered* he summarizes his view in three points:

- (1) In some fashion we meet God in the event of Jesus Christ.
- (2) God is thus met in a genuine, historically conditioned, and entirely human being.
- (3) God and this man are in relationship with each other in the mode of the most complete interpenetration.

Incarnation is not limited to the man Jesus. The man Jesus is the center of this event. He is the One in whom God actualized in a living human personality the potential God-Man relationship which is the divinely-intended truth about every man. The difference between God's activity in Jesus and that in the affairs of other men is a difference of degree rather than of kind.

### The New Testament and the New Christologies

It is quite clear that in recent years there have been many shifts in Christological thinking. There appears to be a general dissatisfaction with the classical Christology. Admittedly, some of the newer conceptions come rather close to the older liberal views. This is especially true of the authors of *The Myth of God Incarnate*.

It is true however, that orthodox Evangelicals, while holding to classical Christology, can learn much from these new Christologies. It is characteristic of most of them that they strongly emphasize the humanity of Christ. Our first reaction is perhaps to say that they over-emphasize it. But is it not equally true that Evangelicals often tend to under-emphasize Christ's humanity?

### The New Testament

It is evident to everyone who knows the New Testament that it nowhere offers a full-scale Christology *a la* Nicea and Chalcedon. Nowhere does it speak of a union of two natures, a divine nature and a human nature, in one divine Person. Even the term "incarnation" does not occur in the New Testament. But, then, what kind of Christology does the New Testament provide?

It is a matter of fact that throughout the whole New Testament we find indications of a high Christology. Actually, *all* Christological statements in the New Testament are high. Graham Stanton rightly remarks: "Judged by later standards parts of the New Testament may seem to reflect a very 'low' Christology, but in a first century Jewish context those same affirmations about Jesus may have been extremely bold and even quite unprecedented." Apparently the attribution of divine attributes to Jesus came slowly and reluctantly. But that, of course, is not surprising at all, when we remember that, with one or two exceptions, all New Testament writers were Jews, brought up in a most stringent monotheism. For them to speak of Jesus in terms of divinity was virtually impossible. And yet it happened!

Such a rapid development of a high Christology can be explained only by the impact Jesus himself must have made on His followers.

For the source of such a development O. Cullmann, J. Jeremias and others point to Jesus' own self-consciousness, especially His filial consciousness. It was this self-understanding of Jesus and the way He expressed it, in both His words, and His deeds, that eventually led to His crucifixion.

For the disciples the resurrection appears to be the turning point. Now Jesus is called Kyrios. The use of this title for the risen Lord must go back to the earliest period of the church, as appears from the fact that in the fifties Paul can use the Aramaic expression "*Maranatha*". This expression indicates that at a very early stage Jesus was worshipped by Christians from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. This attitude of worship may well have been the seedbed for New Testament Christology. It was this attitude of worship which in turn found expression in the more explicit and sophisticated Christological language. Ralph Martin states that it was *in worship* that the decisive step was made of setting the exalted Christ on a level with God as the recipient of the church's praise.

### The Alternative Christologies

It is at this very point that the alternative Christologies of our day fall short. In all the alternative Christologies the continuity between New Testament Christology and the initial datum in Jesus breaks down, because it has been determined beforehand that Jesus cannot be more than man. The alternative Christologies must all "functionalize" the Christological titles accorded to Jesus in the whole New Testament.

This interpretation, however, runs entirely contrary to what the Gospels tell us. There we read that scribes and Pharisees construed Jesus' claim of a special relationship with his heavenly Father quite differently. This can be seen in Mark 2:7, John 5:8, John 19:7, Matthew 26:65, and Luke 22:70.

Naturally, the advocates of alternative Christologies also reject the idea of Jesus' pre-existence. They all re-interpret the New Testament texts that speak of such a pre-existence as Jewish or Hellenistic ways of expressing that Jesus is the fruit of the divine initiative. Careful reading shows that both the term "Son of God" and the concept of "pre-existence" (the two cannot be separated!) are more than just ways of expressing the unique and universal significance of Jesus in creation and redemption.

This is also the secret of all those texts that speak of his pre-existence (Phil. 2:5ff.; Gal. 4:4; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:1-3; John 1:1-3; cf. also all the texts in the Synoptic Gospels, according to which Jesus himself again and again says: "I have come..."). It will not do to put these texts aside as Jewish or Hellenistic expressions to indicate the significance of Jesus. Again I would emphasize that nearly all these texts were written by Jews. Let us face it, the very idea of an incarnation was completely foreign to the Jewish mind. And yet, here Jewish writers speak of the pre-existence of this man Jesus of Nazareth as the eternal Son and they speak of Him in incarnational terms.

I. Howard Marshall rightly points out that the view that the incarnation is found merely on the fringe of the New Testament is a complete travesty of the facts. We find it everywhere.

### Functional Versus Ontological?

Nearly all alternative Christologies opt for a functional Christology over against an ontological Christology. The greatest attraction of a functional Christology, however, lies in the fact that the riddle of how a human being could simultaneously be God can be effectively by-passed. Functional Christologies can accommodate themselves much more easily to the question raised by the historical-critical method, the history of religions, and mythology. The paradox of how God became man is avoided, and so is the embarrassment it has caused theologians.

But can the functional and the ontological aspects really be separated? It is

striking that many "functionalist" are aware of the problems involved in such a separation.

But is such a distinction not to say separation, really tenable? G.C. Berkouwer points out that the [ancient] church meant to found its confession of Christ on the New Testament and never meant to separate dogma from the New Testament. This does not mean that there was no development. One can indeed speak of a functional origin of New Testament Christology. In their reflection the first Christians started with what Christ had done for them, or perhaps we should say: what God had done to Jesus Christ and therefore to them. In their early liturgy and confessions they tried to express that in Jesus Christ they had discovered a new reality of salvation. But from the very start this was connected with the person of Christ.

In the early liturgy and confessions we already hear who He is. It is not just a quirk of the Greek mind, but a universal human apperception, that action implies prior being -- even if, as is also true, being is only apprehended in action. In other words, functional and ontological approaches are complementary.

#### "From Below" or "From Above"?

It is no wonder that many theologians reject the dilemma "from below"/"from above" as a *false dilemma*. Martin Hengel calls it a "a false alternative that goes against the course of New Testament Christology, which develops in an indissoluble dialectic between God's saving activity and man's answer".

Wherever we start, we cannot help discovering two things:

- (1) This Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ in whom the writers, belonging to the post-resurrection church, believed.
- (2) This Jesus simply does not fit into our ordinary earthly categories, as appears from both his words and his deeds.

All who start "from below" encounter this remarkable, incomprehensible fact. All have to admit that we need "two sets of language, man-language and God-language". He not only was on the side of God; He came from God and was Himself God.

#### Chalcedon, Ontology and Salvation

Nicea spoke of the man Jesus of Nazareth as *vere Deus* and *vere homo*. They were well aware of the fact that they could not make the mystery of His being transparent. They did not try to do this either, not even in the definition of Chalcedon.

It also tried to say something about the relationship between the divinity and the humanity of Christ. It had to do this, because there were views abroad which did injustice to either of the two aspects or to both of them. The Antiochene school, as represented by Nestorius, did injustice to the unity by tending to distinguish a divine and a human person in the one Christ. The Alexandrian school as represented by Eutyches, did injustice to the true humanity by at least giving the impression that after the incarnation there was only one nature in which the humanity of Christ was actually swallowed up in His deity. Hence also the famous four negatives: "*without* confusion, *without* change, *without* division, *without* separation". These four negatives mark off the navigable water.

### Ontological Categories

It is evident that the Fathers expressed their view in terms and concepts of that particular period. Terms such as *ousia* (substance being), *physis* (nature), *prosopon* (person), *hypostasis* (subsistence) belonged to the common Hellenistic vocabulary of that time. Adolf von Harnack voiced his opinion that these Hellenistic thought-forms had distorted the original gospel. Yet, it is generally acknowledged that, even though Hellenistic terms and concepts were used, the resulting Christology was very un-Hellenistic. John Macquarrie is altogether right when he says: "Christian doctrines were not conformed to the mould of already existing terminologies, but terms already available were adopted into Christian discourse and given new meanings."

*Ousia* is an indication of "substance". Applied to the three Persons of the Trinity it means: the same stuff or substance of deity has three different representations or, conversely, each person possesses the same and the complete stuff or substance of deity.

*Physis* is an indication of the sum-total of "basic properties that makes something one thing rather than another". Applied to Christ: he possesses all the properties that make God God and all the properties that make man man.

*Hypostasis* is perhaps the most difficult term of all. Etymologically it means: that which underlies or that which gives support. Gradually it obtained the meaning of a positive and concrete and distinct existence, it came very near in meaning to the term *prosopon*, which stands for "individual". In the formula both terms are used side by side: "concurring into one Person (*prosopon*) and one subsistence (*hypostasis*).

A second problem posed by Chalcedon to people of today is that some of the terms have taken on different meanings in the course of the centuries. For instance, today the term "person" belongs to the psychological rather than the ontological order of things. In the climate of Chalcedon "person" had an "ontological meaning", indicating the subject behind all those psychological phenomena.

A third problem, perhaps the most vexing for people of today, is that, because of

its ontological and philosophical terminology and nature, the language of Chalcedon sounds abstruse and even unreal. Modern man is unable to discover the living Lord in this kind of language. He whose mysterious being is described in this formula seems to be an abstraction rather than a living person.

However, we should not make the mistake of attributing to the Fathers of the Council intentions which they never had. For them the discussions preceding Chalcedon and coming to a head at the Council itself were very alive and existential issues.

Whatever one may think of the terminology used, it cannot be denied that Chalcedon achieved two things:

- (1) It established a norm of doctrine in a field in which there had been great confusion.
- (2) It did justice to the fundamental conviction of the church that in Christ a complete revelation of God is made in terms of a genuine human life.

### The Incarnation

We have to move in at least three directions. First of all, we have to spell out the Trinitarian nature of God.

Secondly, we have to reflect more deeply on what this assumption of a full human life by God means for the relation of the deity and the humanity in Christ. If we take the deity seriously, does this not mean that actually nothing is really added to the Son, because as God he already knows humanity to the full? It is true that the Son's human life cannot add any perfection to his perfect being as God. At the same time we should realize that the human existence provided the Son with an irreplaceable experience. "Divine knowledge of human realities cannot be identified with man's personal experience of them. It was precisely this experience that enabled the Son of God to know the human universe in a different way than before."

Thirdly, we must further explore what it means that the *person* of the Savior, that is, the subject of his human life, was the eternal Son of God.

In common parlance we do not distinguish between person and nature, but usually mean by person the whole being, i.e. the person together with the nature he possesses. In Christology, however, such a distinction is necessary, and psychologically it is possible too.

Applied to the incarnation, this means: Jesus' human nature is fully endowed with human reality and human existence...In particular, He has a human soul with a human consciousness and a human will, a soul that acts according to the laws of human

psychology and remains distinct from his divine spirit, "without any commingling". Without losing any of its own qualities, this human nature is personalized by the relational being of the Word. Jesus' human activity is not governed by a human "I", but by the "I" of the Son of God which inspires and guides it. That is why the man Jesus possesses a completely filial personality, capable of enhancing in the most complete way all that is human about him.

Does all this mean that we have now "explained" the mystery? Definitely not! The incarnation itself remains a mystery that can never be "explained".

This unfathomable mystery the Fathers of Chalcedon wanted to safeguard. Their ontological approach, taken in isolation, may seem to be very static, but behind all the "static" formulations there is a dynamic conception.

If Jesus is only "true-man", then there is no place left for the idea that God is triune in His innermost being. At the most one can speak of an "economic" Trinity or a "Trinity-in-revelation", but one can no longer speak of an "essential" or "ontological" Trinity.

Macquarrie writes: "Christian doctrines are so closely interrelated that if you take away one, several others tend to collapse. After incarnation is thrown out, is the doctrine of the Trinity bound to go? What kind of doctrine of atonement remains possible?"

### The Authority of Scripture

Those who advocate an alternative Christology hold a different view of Scripture from the Fathers of Chalcedon. In the final analysis scripture is no more than a human witness. It is the attempt of the early church to express in human words what they have seen in Jesus. The value of the New Testament witness is not that it definitely states the truth about Christianity, but that it bears witness to the earliest experience of Christianity that we possess. Ultimately it is our duty to state in our own words what we in our own day see in Jesus.

### Christology and Soteriology

It is not just a theoretical problem. The ancient church fought the Christological battle because it believed that the gospel itself was at stake. The divinity of Jesus is not a dispensable "extra". We can be saved only by God himself.

Many church Fathers repeat this again and again in their works, and the same idea is encountered in the works of the Reformers.

Once again the church is faced with the question: "Who do you say that I am?" Today, just as much as in the fourth and fifth centuries, our salvation depends upon the answer given to this fundamental question. According to the New Testament, our salvation is nothing less than this: "For you know, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who, though he was rich, yet for your sake became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). These words, which show no trace of mythological speculation, contain in a nutshell the whole Christology of the New Testament.



## Mary Had A Little Lamb

Mary had a little Lamb.  
 He came on Christmas night.  
 She laid Him in a manger bed,  
 This King of life and light.  
 He ate with poor and sinful folk;  
 He claimed He was God's Son.  
 It made the leaders plot His death,  
 This holy, sinless One.  
 He came to give us joy and peace;  
 To take away our sin.  
 He heals the sick and calms the storm  
 And ushers justice in.  
 What makes the Lamb love Mary so  
 And all the world beside?  
 By grace alone He chose His own;  
 For them He lived and died.  
 And we must love the Lamb, you know.  
 His blood will wash us clean.  
 Our words must show that we are His;  
 Our lives by all are seen.  
 One day this Lamb will come again,  
 More Lion than a Lamb;  
 Defeat His foes, reward His own.  
 Oh, praise the day He came!





# Contemporary Christology

Existentialism

Experiential Divinization

Syncretism

Ecumenism

Mythological Interpretation  
(Rudolf Bultmann)

**WESTERN  
SECULARISM  
(humanism/  
antisupernaturalism)**

**EASTERN MYSTICISM  
(pantheism)**

THE WORLD -- an evolving phenomenon  
THE BIBLE -- a Judaeo-Christian interpretation  
THE CHRIST -- an influential humanitarian/guru

# Biblical scholars rule out 80 percent of Jesus's words

Los Angeles Times

**LOS ANGELES** — The provocative Jesus Seminar on Sunday concluded six years of voting on what the Jesus of history most likely said, ending out about 80 percent of words attributed to him in the Gospels and entering with the picture of a Jesus who told parables and made witty comments.

Virtually all of Jesus's words in the Gospel of John were voted down by scholars meeting in Sonoma, Calif., including a pulpit favorite, 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son."

Formed in part to counteract literalist views of the Bible, the Jesus Seminar, a 200-member group of mainline biblical scholars from all over the United States, has stirred controversy since its first meetings in

1985. "Televangelists on talk shows say it's the work of the devil," said founder Robert Funk, a New Testament scholar who has published widely.

The scholars have met twice a year, examining either particular Gospels or types of sayings, basing their discussions on earlier scholarship and their own studies.

Many academic colleagues have criticized, among other things, the seminar's unconventional voting techniques: red and pink beads dropped into a ballot box for probable or possible authentic sayings; gray and black beads for sayings that allegedly reveal the theological bias of the Gospel authors or the beliefs of beleaguered early Christians, but not necessarily the messages of Jesus.

Almost 200 scholars from universities and seminaries

have participated; their conclusions are often the same as those taught outside of fundamentalist and evangelical circles, Mr. Funk said.

## Feeling a hunger?

Seminar member Marcus Borg of Oregon State University, who also chairs the Historical Jesus Section of the large Society of Biblical Literature, said his experience of teaching adults is that the findings will "feed a hunger" in the churches. "Many mainstream Christians can no longer believe the picture of Jesus they got as

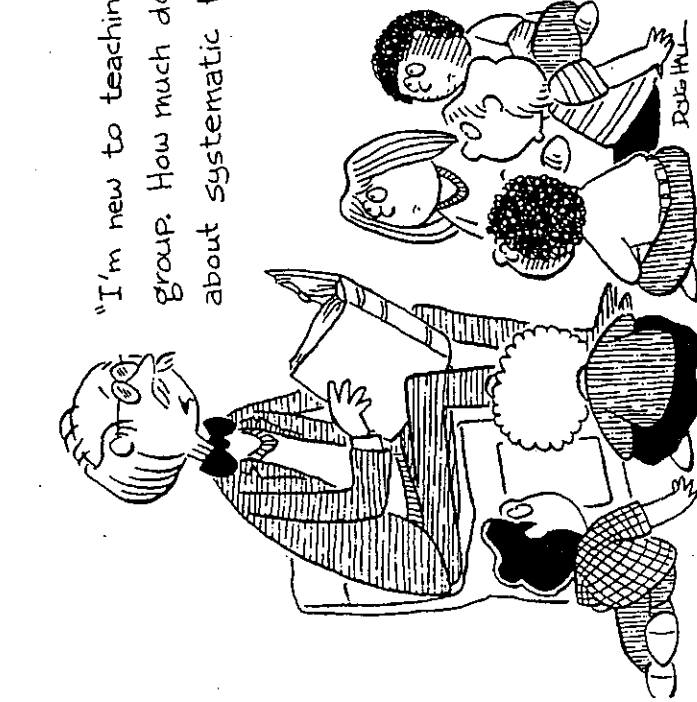
has no honor in his own country.

"Most scholars, if they had worked through the sayings as we had, would tend to agree there is virtually nothing in the fourth Gospel [John] that goes back to Jesus," said Robert Funk of Vassar College. Jesus says in John, "I am the good shepherd. ... I am the light of the world. ... I am the bread of life," but Mr. Funk said that "is mostly the work of the author." Jesus rarely refers to himself in the other Gospels.

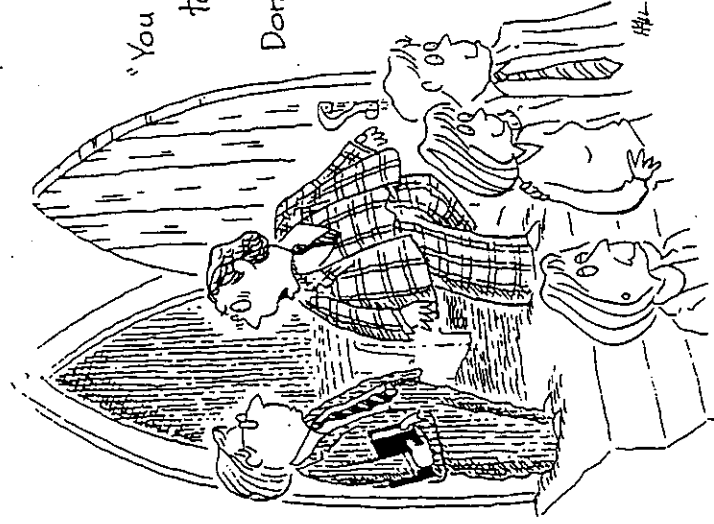
Because the Gospel of John is a favorite source in sermons, Mr. Funk said the Jesus Seminar's results "will be startling to most people and deeply offensive to many, not just fundamentalists."

By contrast, the Rev. Raymond Brown, a Catholic authority on the Gospel of John, says he finds "a strong historical

"You made me think today, Pastor. Don't ever do that again!"



"I'm new to teaching your age group. How much do you know about systematic theology?"



substratum" in it. Retired from teaching at Union Theological Seminary in New York City and now at St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, Calif., the Rev. Brown said he had no interest in joining the Jesus Seminar.

## 31 sayings get 'red' label

Mr. Funk had not tallied full results as of Sunday, but he said that, in all, 31 sayings in the four biblical Gospels and several apocryphal sources fell into the "red" category of authentic sayings, only 15 of which are actually different, because of parallel versions in more than one Gospel. They included the parables of the good Samaritan and the mustard seed, the advice to love your enemies, and some Sermon on the Mount pronouncements such as, "Blessed are you poor, for you shall inherit the kingdom of God."

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## **The Death of God**

### **(a brief survey)**

#### **I. Its Foundation**

**A. Major Advocate - Thomas J.J. Altizer, William Hamilton,  
Paul vanBuren**

**B. The nature of man's world - Man's understanding of the world has changed. Science has explained the world without God. Therefore, there is no longer a place for God.**

**C. The nature of man - Darwin tried to describe man in terms of the highest form of matter. No Theory of God is necessary to account for man.**

**D. The nature of reality - From a metaphysical view (need for ultimate cause and controller), there is no longer a need for God to interpret reality.**

#### **II. Modernity and Secularization**

**There is no place for God in a secular society, no need of Him by secular man and no reasonable place for Him in man's thinking. Bonhoeffer spoke of a religionless Christianity.**

**If God is only a question and answer in this generation, then God has ceased to be.**

#### **III. Forerunners in the "Death of God" movement**

**Hegel, Nietzsche and William Blake**

**A. Four ways in which the "Death Of God" is used:**

**1. Language about God is dead.**

**We always have a problem about the meaning of the word "God."**

**2. The Christian Concept of God is Dead.**

**This is Altizer's view, but his logic is not consistent. He does not connect his statements from one time to the next. He is actually a pantheist. He says that God came in Jesus and when Jesus died, God died. Now God is made manifest in another reality.**

**3. The Thought Patterns of Our Secular Culture Make Communion with God Impossible.**

Either God has abandoned us or we have lost Him. We must wait in silence for His return.

**4. There is no God. (atheism)**

William Hamilton's point of view.

**B. What shall we say in response to the "Death of God" movement?**

1. The secular world has not overcome the Jesus of History who revealed Himself as God and was thus vindicated by the resurrection.
2. The reality of Christianity is not tied absolutely to any world-view, philosophy or language game.
3. None of these views adequately confront scripture, nor do they allow for the reality of the mystery of personality in and beyond history.
4. These views are little more than statements of agnosticism and atheism.
5. These theories raise legitimate questions but provide no satisfactory answers. Hence the "Death of God" movement has died!

# The Index View

## The Real Jesus: An Issue Of Truth

By R. Albert Mohler Jr.  
Editor

The Jesus Seminar is at it again. This group, which proposed to consider the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus recorded in the gospels, has now completed its project and is ready to report. Their findings? They determined that Jesus said virtually none of the statements attributed to Him in the Gospel of John, and very few found in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

The Jesus Seminar is the brainchild of Robert W. Funk, who established the project as an attempt to bring the conclusions of professional biblical critics to a mass audience. His vision of democratic scholarship involved bringing together a work group of critical scholars who would share their findings with the broader public.

The group has a flair for the dramatic, if not the ridiculous. The scholars subjected passages of Scripture to rigorous critical investigation, and then voted on whether or not the saying could be traced to Jesus, or was an invention of the church. They voted with colored beads. Red indicated "Jesus said it," pink, "Jesus said something like it," grey, "Jesus didn't say it but it contains His ideas," and black, "Jesus didn't say it."

When all was said and done, the scholars dropped very few red or pink beads. As reported previously, they "determined" that Jesus did not preach much of the Sermon On The Mount, that He did not predict His return to earth, and that He did not expect His own death on the cross. Furthermore, they stated, Jesus was not celibate and did not preach celibacy.

Now they have turned to the Gospel of John, and only one of the sayings of Jesus recorded in that gospel received one pink vote, and that concerned Jesus's statement that a prophet received no honor in his own country.

What about the "I am" statements of Jesus? The scholars were unanimous that these statements were not said by Jesus, but were the invention of the gospel author or the early church. There is "virtually nothing that goes back to Jesus."

Funk started the group because he was frustrated that the fruits of biblical criticism had not been shared with the general public. Indeed, he said that the group was formed partly in an attempt to contradict "fundamentalist" interpretations of Jesus, which would, we can quickly determine, include any orthodox understandings of Jesus the Christ.

Actually, the conclusions reached by the Jesus Seminar are nothing new. Attempts to discover the "real Jesus" behind and beyond the biblical text were present even in the first century. Many of the critical conclusions reached by the Jesus Seminar were suggested

hundreds of years ago, though the seminar now employs critical approaches developed over the past century.

The fact is that attempts to reduce Jesus to a creative and insightful prophetic teacher are nothing new. There are, in fact, very few new heresies. Those determined to demonstrate their unbelief find creativity hard to attain. There is very little to deny that someone has not already denied.

Why should the church take the Jesus Seminar seriously? Because it reveals the inevitable result of a perspective which denies Scripture as the revealed Word of God. If the Bible is simply one ancient text among hundreds of others; if the truth claims in the Bible have no special revealed status; if the professional scholar is the authority and source of meaning rather than the biblical text, then the church has no business preaching Jesus Christ as the divine Savior, by whose substitutionary atonement our stripes are healed.

But the church has faced this issue from its infancy until now, and it has considered the challenges levied against the truth of the Gospel, and it has come time and again to acknowledge the Bible as the very Word of God addressed to each individual person and entrusted to the church as its own authority and message.

The Jesus Seminar has become a parody of its own objective. In so doing it has served to remind the church of its responsibility to call and sustain believing scholars who recognize and affirm the full authority and integrity of the Bible and its message. And the Jesus Seminar also reminds the church that unbelief must always be addressed.

"There is," said one seminar participant, "a real hunger for an alternative picture of Jesus." And so there is. Some human beings faced with the inescapable claim placed on them by Jesus Christ and His gospel will have an insatiable hunger for an alternative Jesus who is merely human and makes no claim on their lives. The church has always recognized that desire as a hunger for unbelief, and it has responded with a clear message that Jesus is He who was fully God and fully man, was born of a virgin, lived without sin, was crucified as our substitute, was resurrected on the third day, ascended into heaven, and will return to establish His kingdom. In His name, and in no other, is salvation to be found.

Christianity stands or falls on the claims it makes to historical events and the unblemished truth of the Bible. The integrity of the church is at stake when unbelief is unaddressed. As Andres Suarez observed, "There are no heresies in a dead religion." Neither is there life in a faith which can no longer distinguish truth from error.

# Looking Up

## True Friends Are True Treasures

By James N. Griffith  
Executive Director—Treasurer  
Georgia Baptist Convention

As one grows older and gains some wisdom with the passing of the years, it becomes easier to recognize that true friends are true treasures.

The emphasis here is on true friends—not "fair weather friends" who are here today and gone tomorrow.

Great friends are great blessings and are worthy of all appreciation. For true friendship endures.

I agree with the statement: "I do not give my friendship lightly—but once it is given—it is never withdrawn."

What is a true friend? Here are a few descriptions of true friendship:

A friend is a source of gladness—even when there is not too much to be happy about.

A friend can make your grief less painful and your pain more bearable.

A friend eases your disappointment and makes your problems easier to solve.

But a friend is even more than this.

A friend rejoices with you when you soar to the brightness of the mountaintops and then solemnly walks beside you through the darkness of the valley.

A friend is one with whom you are always comfortable and one for whom you are ever grateful.

A friend is one who lifts you up and never puts you down.

As one great man replied, when asked why he had enjoyed such great success in life, "I had a friend."

This statement is easy to understand when one knows from personal experience that a friend is one who strengthens you with his prayers, blesses you with his love, and encourages you with his faith and hope.

A true friend is an earthly treasure who brings to your life one of the great joys this side of heaven.

# Overheard

"In recent years the hurricane forces of change have dramatically altered our societal landscape. The changes are breathtaking and some skeptics wonder if the church and Christianity can survive.... Let there be no doubt—the cause and church of Jesus Christ will not only survive, but thrive! ... As the 20th century ends and the 21st century begins, Christians are privileged to see God perform His great acts through Christ's church one more time. Perhaps the best time of all!"

—Leith Anderson, pastor of Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minn., in *Dying for Change: The New Realities Facing the Church*.

"To say that the First Amendment's guarantees of religious freedom and separation of church and state were somehow meant to restrict the political participation of people of faith or to disqualify their religious convictions and beliefs from consideration in the public arena of ideas is to twist and to distort the First Amendment's intent and meaning beyond all recognition."

—Richard D. Land, executive director, The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, in *Southern Baptist Public Affairs*, Fall/Winter, 1991.

"In previous eras, that trepidation and attendant search for meaning were vented in daily church services. Now, when months and years seem clogged with the pursuit of condos, cars, and college tuitions, the presumption that life is a spiritual quest has faded. War, ironically, revived that ageless calling, sending near-record numbers of Americans to pray at synagogues and churches. Yet, after the last mortar is fired, piety and compassion will likely play only bit parts in the New World Order."

—A pessimistic analysis by David Whitman in *U.S. News & World Report*, February 25, 1991. The comment betrays the fact that much of the media is blind to the quiet faith and piety practiced by millions of Americans, with or without war.

## Counterfeit Christs

# Will The Real Jesus Please Stand Up?

James Walker

**A**n old TV game show, *To Tell the Truth*, ended each program by asking the real guest to, "please stand up." Every episode featured three studio guests, all claiming to be the same person. One guest was authentic, but the other two were phonies. The celebrity contestants had the difficult and often humorous task of identifying the genuine article. At the climax of the program, the two impostors remained seated and the real guest stood to reveal his identity.

*Jesus #1,*

*Jesus #2,*

*Or Jesus #3*

Christians today witness many religious groups claiming a belief in Jesus. However, their stand on *who* Jesus is varies widely and is often contradictory. John Allegro started a church in California called the Sacred Mushroom of the Cross. His followers believe that Jesus Christ was a mushroom. They believe in Jesus — but obviously not the Jesus of the Bible. While most pseudo-Christian groups are not as bizarre on their doctrine of Christ as this cult, they are just as wrong (2 Corinthians 11:4). Theirs is "another Jesus whom we have not preached."

The contestants on *To Tell the Truth* had only two counterfeits to eliminate before casting their votes. Today, unfortunately, there are hundreds of competing Christs

and each group produces lists of convincing Bible "proof texts" for their candidate.

Is Jesus really a reincarnated "master" who traveled to India to learn from the Yogis before beginning his earthly ministry? Was he just an ordinary man who discovered his "Christ Consciousness" by realizing that everything and everyone is "God" — including himself? This is the Jesus of some in the New Age.

Was Jesus the Spirit Brother of Lucifer? Is Christ the offspring of a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother? Was Christ a polygamist who came to America after his death and resurrection? This is the Jesus described by Mormon Apostles and Prophets.

Is Jesus really the archangel Michael, a created being who died on a stake and never rose bodily from the grave? This is the Jesus of the Watchtower.

Or is Jesus really God incarnate (both fully God and fully man) the second person of the Trinity, who died on the cross as a total payment for the sins of those who fully trust Him as Savior?

### *A Deadly Case of Mistaken Identity*

When the TV panelists were fooled by one of the fake guests, there was no real damage done. In fact, part of the program's appeal was watching a sharp celebrity being deceived by a clever guest. But the person who puts their trust in a counterfeit Christ is involved in a deadly case of mis-

taken identity. Jesus himself pointed those out when he said, "...if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

The Jews obviously believed in a *Jesus* (he was standing right in front of them), but they did not believe the right things about Jesus. Their Jesus was only a man — a carpenter from Nazareth — who had become a radical rabbi. Know who Christ is — or die in your sins! The statement certainly shocked the Jews with whom Christ was debating. They answered, "Who art thou?" (v. 25).

In part, Jesus replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58). Jesus was clearly identifying himself as God — the "I AM" of Exodus 3.

Unfortunately these particular religious leaders rejected the deity of Christ and ultimately refused to trust Him alone as Savior. They clearly recognized Christ's statement to be a claim of deity. In their minds Jesus' claim to be God was blasphemous. Their response to Christ's claim to be the "I AM" was unmistakably direct — "Then took they up stones to cast at him" (v. 59).

Like those first century religious leaders, the pseudo-Christian groups today reject the true identity of Christ. Besides a few historical similarities, these Christs bear little resemblance to the Jesus of the Bible. Sometimes only the name is the same!

*Continued on page 6*

# The Jesus of The Bible

**T**he Bible presents Jesus Christ, the unique Savior of mankind, as being both fully God and fully man. He is eternal, without beginning or end, and as the second Person of the Trinity is co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He was begotten by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary, became flesh and lived a sinless life, dying on the cross as full payment for the sins of mankind. He rose bodily from the grave and one day this *same* Jesus will physically and visibly return to earth.

## Only True Christ

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24).

"Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them" (Luke 21:8).

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5).

## Virgin-Born Human

"...the young child with Mary his mother" (Matthew 2:11).

"Behold, thy mother and thy brethren..." (Matthew 12:47).

"...The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

"Made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4).

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

"Mary... was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:18).

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child... God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

Joseph physically "knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus" (Matthew 1:25).

## Fully God

"...The Word was God" (John 1:1).

"And Thomas answered [Jesus] and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever" (Hebrews 1:8).

"Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5).



*"The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:25-26).*

*Barbieri: Christ and the Woman of Samaria, Detroit Institute of the Arts*

"For in him [Jesus] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

"The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

"...and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God; and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

"In the beginning was the Word... All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

"For by him [Jesus] were all thing created... all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16-17).

## Purpose: To Die On Cross

"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how that he must... be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matthew 16:21).

"For even the Son of Man came... to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

"But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs" (John 19:33).

"Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails [plural]... I will not believe" (John 20:24).

"Without the shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

## Bodily Resurrection

"...I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17-18).

"But they... supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them... Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh

and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:37-39).

"Then he said to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side" (John 20:27).

## Second Coming

"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

"Every eye shall see him" (Revelation 1:7).

This is the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible! ✠

## The Jesus of...

# The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Rick Branch

Unlike the biblical concept, which explains Jesus is without beginning, the Mormon understanding teaches He was a created son of God the Father and God the Mother in a place called the pre-existence and He is the spirit brother of Satan.

According to Joseph F. Smith, sixth prophet of the LDS Church, "Among the spirit children of Elohim, the first-born was and is Jehovah, or Jesus Christ, to whom all others are juniors" (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 70). The idea of being *born* implies a certain set of circumstances, part of which is the necessity of a female counterpart. In the case of Mormon theology, that is exactly what is being taught.

In the 143rd General Conference, Apostle LeGrand Richards recounted an incident which had occurred earlier in his career. After speaking to a group of ministers from other churches, one of them raised a question. "He said, 'We have heard it said that you believe that God has a wife. Would you explain that to us?' I think he thought he had me in trouble, and so I rather facetiously said, 'I don't see how in the world he could have a son without a wife, do you?'" (*Ensign*, July 1973, p. 79). It is obvious from this statement alone, that the LDS leadership neither correctly under-

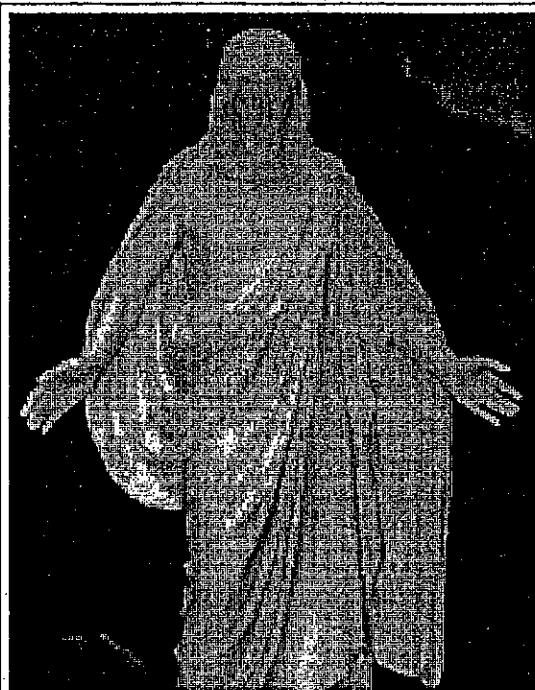
stands nor teaches the biblical concept of Jesus being the Son of God.

It is also clear that according to Mormonism, God the Father has a wife who

begat Jesus. However, Jesus was not the only son of God the Father and God the Mother. As Spencer W. Kimball, twelfth LDS prophet explained, "I testify that we [all mankind] are the spirit offspring of a loving God, our Heavenly Father" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p. 86). In addition to Jesus and all humans being the offspring of a heavenly mother and father, Lucifer was also in this pre-existent sphere.

As Alvin R. Dyer, one of the LDS Apostles mentions, Lucifer was one of the "spirit sons of God the Father" (*Who Am I?*, p. 140). As a spirit son, Lucifer presented a plan for the salvation of all the other sons of God who would come to earth. Milton R. Hunter of the First Council of the Seventy wrote, "The appointment of Jesus to be the Savior of the world was contested by one of the other sons of God. He was called Lucifer, son of the morning. Haughty, ambitious, and covetous of power and glory, this spirit-brother of Jesus desperately tried to become the Savior of mankind" (*Gospel Through The Ages*, p. 15).

Despite this controversy in the pre-existence, Jesus eventually "accepted the appointment to his earthly mission" (*The Improvement Era*, David O. McKay, Dec. 1964, p. 1029).



*The Mormon Jesus: Christus statue displayed at the LDS Temple Visitor's Center in Salt Lake City. This Jesus was married to three women, was the Spirit-brother of Lucifer and was not begotten of the Holy Spirit.*

Watchman Staff Photo



## No Virgin Birth

As with most cults, Mormonism too, cannot accept the biblical teaching of the Virgin Birth. The current prophet of the LDS Church, Ezra Taft Benson proclaimed, "I testify that Christ was born into mortality with Mary as His mother and our Heavenly Father as His Father" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p. 86). What does that mean?

In simple terms, the Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explains, "And Christ was born into the world as the literal Son of this Holy Being; he was born in the same personal, real, and literal sense that any mortal son is born to a mortal father. There is nothing figurative about his paternity; he was begotten, conceived and born in the normal and natural course of events, for he is the Son of God, and that designation means what it says" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 742).

## Married With Children

After growing to adulthood, according to several LDS Apostles, Jesus was married to at least three women. As a scriptural proof-text for this doctrine, Orson Hyde, one of the original Apostles of the Mormon Church, cited John chapter two. "...Jesus was the bridegroom at the marriage of Cana of Galilee, and he told them what to do. Now there was actually a marriage; and if Jesus was not the bridegroom on that occasion, please tell who was. ... I shall say here, that before the Savior died, he looked upon his own natural children, as we look upon ours..." (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 2, p. 89). Thus, not only was Jesus married, He also, according to Mormonism, had a family.

Exhibiting another common characteristic of the cults, is Mormonism's ab-

horrence for the biblical teachings about the cross of Calvary. In the *Temple Preparation Seminar Discussion*, which is published by the LDS Church, it is explained, "...Jesus' greatest suffering in making the atonement for mankind occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he took upon himself our sins, which caused him to bleed at every pore. His suffering at that point was even more intense than when he was put to death on the cross" (p. 18).

## Jesus and the Cross

If the atonement was in Gethsemane, what then transpired on the cross? As the *LDS Church News* states, "He paid the price for us to rise from the grave. Through His own willful sacrifice — the infinite and eternal atonement — we shall live again. ... It also provided a way for those who serve Him and keep His commandments to return to His presence in the kingdom of His Father" (18 March 1989, p. 16). Hence, the cross guaranteed resurrection for all and salvation only for those who could keep the commandments.

James Talmage, perhaps Mormonism's greatest theologian, explained Jesus' atoning work on the cross. Talmage wrote, "We believe that through the sufferings, death and atonement of Jesus Christ all mankind, without one exception, are to be completely and fully redeemed... [of] Adam's transgression..." (*Articles of Faith*, p. 477).

Thus, the atonement and death of Jesus on the cross actually only forgives mankind of Adam's original sin. How then is man forgiven of his own personal sin? In the *Improvement Era*, an official periodical of the LDS Church, Joseph Fielding Smith, tenth prophet, explained the solu-

tion. "Our Eternal Father would have every soul saved if that were feasible. Salvation, however, is based on merit and obedience to divine law and therefore is only obtained through compliance with divine commandments" (Nov. 1965, p. 962).

According to Mormonism, Salvation is based on Man's merit (goodness and good works) and not on the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

## Jesus In America

Found within the pages of the *Book of Mormon* is the story of Jesus' visit to the Americas. In 1975, N. Eldon Tanner, who was then First Counselor in the LDS First Presidency, gave a speech entitled, *Christ in America*. In that speech he gave a synopsis of this unique doctrine of Mormonism.

"Thus it is clear why the Savior, following his crucifixion and resurrection, came to the Western Hemisphere amidst the signs and wonders which had been foretold, that these people might have the same advantage and opportunities for learning and living his gospel as those among whom he lived in mortality" (*Ensign*, May 1975, p. 34).

Finally, Robert L. Millet, chairman of the Department of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University, makes an interesting observation. "These are the infinite actions of a god, and they require the intervention of godly powers in man's behalf" (*By Grace Are We Saved*, p. 94).

Born of heavenly parents, spirit brother to Lucifer, elected to be Savior, married to three wives, paid only for Adam's transgression and doing the work of a god — is this the Jesus of the Bible? ✠

# Real Jesus Please Stand

Continued from page 3

## It Is Time "To Tell the Truth"

The theme of this issue of the *Watchman Expositor* is an examination of some of the counterfeit Christs in contrast with the true

Jesus revealed in the Bible. This is no minor theological "hair-splitting" but strikes at the very essence of the Gospel and the fundamental differences between Christianity and the pseudo-Christian religions.

"Whom do you say that I am?" This question is as relevant today as it was when Jesus asked it of Peter. Today, conflicting

answers to this question are even more numerous than in the first century. This month's magazine is designed to help Christians recognize these counterfeit Christs and to share the true Jesus with those who have accepted "another Jesus, whom we have not preached" (2 Corinthians 11:4). ✠

## The Jesus of...

# The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society

James Walker

**T**he Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, headquartered in Brooklyn, New York, teaches that Jesus has not always existed, but was himself a created being originally named Michael, the Archangel.

The Jehovah's Witnesses' view of Christ is explained in their book, *Aid to Bible Understanding*. Under the heading *Michael*, they state, "Scriptural evidence indicated that the name Michael applied to God's Son before he left heaven to become Jesus Christ and also after his return. Michael is the only one said to be the 'archangel,' meaning 'chief angel' or 'principle angel'" (p. 1152).

### *Jesus ≠ God*

The Watchtower's Jesus is not equal to God the Father, nor eternal, but is himself a created being. Under the section *Jesus Christ*, they teach, "Thus the scriptures identify the Word (Jesus in his pre-human

*The Watchtower's Jesus is not equal to God the Father, nor eternal, but is himself a created being.*

existence) as God's first creation, his first-born Son. ...this son was actually a creature of God..." (*Ibid*, p. 918).

Jehovah's Witnesses also teach that this archangel was transformed into a human at Bethlehem and was named Jesus — but he was not yet the Christ. The Society's book, *Things In Which it is Impossible for God to Lie*, teaches, "Not at birth but

at thirty years of age Jesus became Christ or 'Anointed One'" (p. 211).

### *Christ Died On a "Torture Stake"*

Jehovah's Witnesses are also told that Christ did not die on a cross, which is considered to be a symbol of apostate Christianity. Instead, they believe that, "On Nisan 14 of the year 33 C.E. Jesus' enemies put him to death on a torture stake [a single upright pole]" (*The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life*, p. 51).

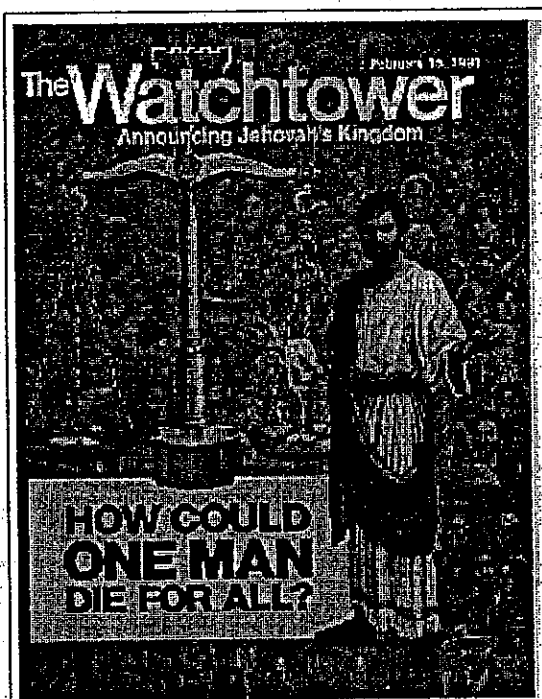
By this method only one nail would have been used to secure Jesus' hands. The Witnesses have published pictures depicting such a "torture stake" (*Awake*, 1 April 1974, p. 14).

### *No Bodily Resurrection*

Jesus never rose *bodily* from the dead according to Jehovah's Witnesses. In *The Kingdom is at Hand* they explain, "At death he laid aside the human organism in which he ministered as a new creature for three and a half years; and in his resurrection he was no more human. He was raised as a spirit creature" (p. 258).

The human body of Christ was destroyed according to the Watchtower. After his spiritual resurrection, he appeared to his disciples in different, temporary, fleshly

bodies. The Society states, "However for forty days after his resurrection Jesus appeared to his disciples on different occasions in various fleshly bodies, just as angels had appeared to men of ancient times. Like those angels, he had the power to construct and to disintegrate those fleshly



*"The man who could be the ransom had to be a perfect human... the exact equal of Adam... a 'God-man' would not balance the scales of justice." Jesus was not God and did not rise bodily from the dead. After his death on a stake, "Jesus was 'made alive in the spirit' his earthly remains disposed of in some undisclosed manner" (Watchtower, 15 February 1991, pp. 13, 15).*

bodies at will, for the purpose of proving visibly that he had been resurrected" (Aid to Bible Understanding, p. 1394).

### Jesus Returned in 1914

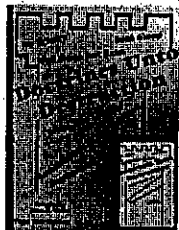
Because Watchtower theology teaches that Christ's resurrection was not bodily but spiritual only, they teach that His Second Coming (they prefer the term *Presence*) would be invisible (*Ibid*, pp. 1335-36). The Society teaches that this second *Presence* has already occurred. Originally, it was taught the second presence had happened in the year 1874.

A short biography of Charles Taze Russell, founder of the organization, was published in the Society's book, *The Divine Plan of the Ages*. It records, "Like other Christians he [Russell] was looking for the second coming of Christ. Between 1872-1876 he discovered that the Scriptures clearly teach that the Lord would not return in a body of flesh, but would return as a spirit being, invisible to human eyes, and that his second presence was due in the autumn of 1874" (1927 ed., p. 4).

However, the Society later revised its chronology and now dates this invisible second presence in the year 1914 (*The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life*, p. 86).

According to the Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus is a created being, the Archangel Michael, a man who became the Christ 30 years after his birth at Bethlehem, a resurrected spirit creature and returned invisible in 1914. Is this the Jesus of the Bible? ❖

### Witnessing to Witnesses



**Doctrines Unto Destruction** is a helpful tape and documentation guide for witnessing to Jehovah's Witnesses. It refutes key Watchtower

claims and focuses on the vital issue of authority. Available this month for a donation of \$8.00 or more. Please ask for it by name with your donation. Thank you for your gift.

## Lord Maitreya: Another Modern Messiah

Rick Branch

"In July of 1977, Maitreya, the Christ, descended from His ancient retreat in the Himalayas and took up residence in the Asian community of East London. There He lives and works as an ordinary, modern man concerned with modern problems" (*The Christ is Now Here*, Tara Center, 1987, p. 1).

Benjamin Creme, founder and leader of the Tara Center a New Age group which promotes the teachings of the Maitreya, has followed the New Age theology of separating the man Jesus from the universal Christ consciousness. According to Creme, "In Palestine 2,000 years ago, the Christ worked through His disciple Jesus — from the time of the Baptism to the Crucifixion — to inaugurate the Age of Pisces. In the Age of Aquarius, Maitreya will not act through a disciple, but comes Himself. Jesus, who is now a Master, has played an important role in preparing the way for His return" (*Ibid*).

Jesus, according to Creme, was only a man who possessed and demonstrated the Christ consciousness of the Lord Maitreya. Jesus was but an instrument which helped prepare the way for the true deity — Lord Maitreya. As Creme explains, Maitreya is not only the deity for Christianity but actually he is the deity of all religions.

"He [Maitreya] has been expected for generations by all of the major religions. Christians know Him as the Christ. . . Jews await Him as the Messiah; the Hindus look for the coming of Krishna; Buddhists expect Him as Maitreya Buddha; the Muslims anticipate the Iman Mahdi. The names may be different but they all designate the same One: the World Teacher, whose personal name is Maitreya. He returns now, at the beginning of the age of Aquarius, as the teacher and guide for those of every religion and those of no religion" (*The Emergence: Special Information Issue*, p. 1).

Since taking up residence in London, the Maitreya has visited several countries and made appearances at numerous Tara Center rallies. In 1993 alone *The Emergence* newsletter has reported his appearance in such places as Nairobi, Serbia, Scotland, Romania, and America (Jan/Feb., May, June 1993).

Interestingly, the Bible explains, "... this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Does the Lord Maitreya of the Tara Center qualify as *this same Jesus*?



A "New Age Christ," Lord Maitreya, is billed as the return of Christ, Buddah, Krishna and others. He was photographed in 1988 appearing to 6,000 people in Nairobi, Kenya.

Photo courtesy: The Tara Center

# The Jesus of... The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity

Rick Branch

**W**hile most cults distort the true nature and work of Jesus and His mission, they at least acknowledge that He completed His mission successfully. Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the founder and leader of the Unification Church, however, disagrees. Jesus' death, in Unification theology, is explained as an error.

"Christians have traditionally believed that Jesus' death on the cross was predestined as the original plan of God. No, it was not! It was a grievous error to crucify Jesus Christ.... Death on the cross was not the mission that God had originally intended for Jesus, his Son" (*Outline of The Principle: Level 4*, pp. 79, 81).

If Jesus' death was not the plan of God, what was the plan?

As Moon teaches, "He [Jesus] came to erect the Kingdom of God on earth, but instead he had to caution his disciples even to keep his identity a secret because people did not accept his legitimacy as the Messiah, and he therefore lacked the power to be the King of kings" (*God's Warning to the World: Rev. Moon's Message from Prison*, p. 122).

Not only did Jesus fail to become the King of kings, according to Moon, he also failed to raise the perfect family. In a section of Moon's scripture, the *Divine Principle*, under the subheading, *The Purpose of Jesus' Coming as the Messiah*, is found this insightful information.

## *Christ's Purpose: A Perfect Marriage/Family*

The main purpose of the earthly ministry of Jesus was to make man perfect, which was the original intent of God in the Garden of Eden. Once man has achieved



*Rev. Sun Myung Moon (left) teaches that Jesus failed to bring complete salvation in His first coming and that the crucifixion of Christ was not in God's original plan. Complete salvation will be accomplished only through the second coming of the Messiah. In 1992, Rev. Moon proclaimed himself to be, "...the Savior, the Lord of the Second advent, the Messiah."*

Watchman staff photo: Unification Seminary, New York

earthly perfection, he "...becomes one body with God, possesses deity, and cannot commit sins.... This man is not in need of redemption or of a savior, nor does he need the life or prayer and faith required by fallen men, because he is without original sin. Such a man, being himself without original sin, comes to multiply children of goodness without sin; in consequence, his children are not in need of a savior for the redemption of their sins" (pp. 140-141).

## *Jesus Should Not Have Died on the Cross*

Since Jesus, according to Moon, was not supposed to die, and since He was sinless and only a sinless man can reproduce sinless children, it has been taught that Jesus' ultimate purpose was to be married and begin the perfect family! This is only one of the many unique insights about Jesus which Moon has taught.

Some may wonder from where Moon received these new doctrinal insights. For such skeptics, he has a simple answer. In speaking of his authority to teach such doctrines he explains, "I spoke with Jesus Christ in the spirit world. And I spoke also with John the Baptist. This is my authority" (*God's Warning to the World*, p. 128).

Because Jesus failed to get married and produce children, as well as having been mistakenly crucified, it may be asked was anything salvageable in such a mismanaged life?

Fortunately, as Moon teaches, some benefit did come from Jesus' death. "By resurrecting the crucified Jesus, God opened up a way of spiritual salvation, a way to a realm free from satanic invasion" (*Outline of The Principle*, p. 82, emphasis added). This spiritual salvation, however, is not as good as it sounds.

"Only man's spirit can attain salvation.... Our body still awaits redemption.... There is no one who has been cleansed of original sin. It is for this reason that the Messiah must appear again on earth, to liquidate our sins completely and establish the Kingdom of Heaven, fulfilling God's Purpose for the Creation" (*Ibid*, pp. 82-83).

This second coming will provide God with another chance to give man physical salvation, in addition to spiritual salvation.



As Moon explains, "Thus Jesus died on the cross, not to fulfill his own ultimate hope, not because of God's original plan, but by the will of sinful people. Christ was destined to return from that moment on. He will return to consummate his mission on earth. Mankind must await his second coming for the complete salvation of the world" (*God's Warning to the World*, p. 132).

Not only has Moon proclaimed heretical doctrines about Jesus' mission, he has also espoused erroneous theology concerning the Second Coming.

Moon continues by stating, "In like manner, although many Christians up to the present have believed that Jesus would come on the clouds, there are no grounds to deny the possibility of the Lord being born in the flesh on the earth at the Second Advent... the numerous biblical records concerning the Second Advent from the viewpoint that the Lord might come on the earth by being born in the flesh" (*Divine Principle*, pp. 500-501).

After laying the above foundation, Moon, on several occasions, strongly implied that he was this Lord of the Second Advent, born in the flesh, come to fulfill Jesus failed mission. Then last year, he announced to his followers that he is "...the Savior, the Lord of the Second advent, the Messiah" (*Today's World*, September 1992, pp. 20-21).

According to the Unification Church, Jesus was to get married and raise the perfect family but instead failed in His mission by getting Himself crucified. Is this the Jesus of the Bible? ❖

### PRAYER REQUEST



**T h e l m a "Granny" Geer**, a veteran counter-cult missionary, has suffered congestive heart failure. Geer is a former Mormon, a decendent of John D. Lee, and author of the book, *Mormonism, Mama, and Me*. *Expositor* readers are asked to pray for "Granny." Doctors say that her condition is critical.

## The Jesus of... *The Way International*

James Walker

**T**he Way, International headquartered in New Knoxville, Ohio, was founded by Victor Paul Wierwille, who was a devout anti-trinitarian. This organization teaches that Jesus Christ is not eternal and did not exist before the creation of the world. In his book, *Jesus Christ Is Not God*, Wierwille teaches: "We, as well as Jesus Christ, were with God in His foreknowledge, but not in existence, before the world began. Neither did Jesus Christ" (pp. 31-32). Wierwille teaches that Jesus did not exist—except in the mind of God before conception in Mary's womb, and was at that time "Jesus Christ the Son of God, was made by God" (*Ibid*, pp. 103-104).

### *Divine Genetic Engineering*

The Jesus of The Way becomes nothing more than a miraculously conceived sinless man. He was not God in the flesh but only a very special man who became "God's Son" as a result of divine genetic engineering.

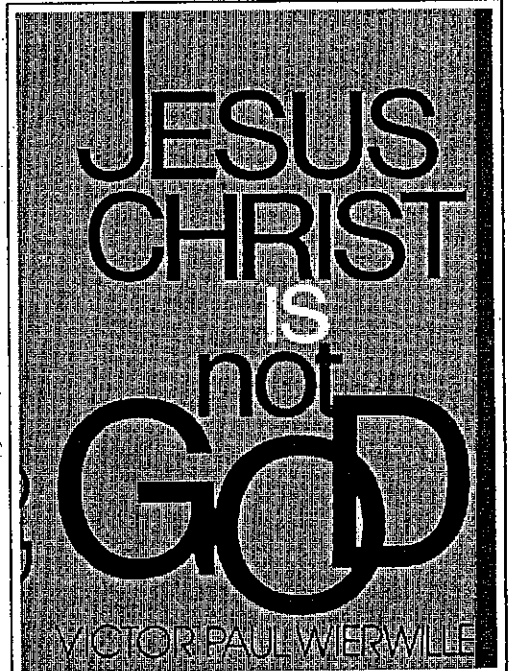
Wierwille explains, "There is no question that the Bible teaches divine conception.... Jesus was born sinless, but he also maintained himself sinless as he grew older... [Because] the genes with the dominant characteristics came to Jesus not through Mary. They came by way of the creation of a sperm by God and thus Jesus had sinless blood" (*Ibid*, pp. 72-73).

He goes on to teach that Christ was crucified along with four other men (not two thieves) on an upright pole or tree.

Seeking to correct traditional views, Wierwille wrote, "...two on this side and two on that side and Jesus in the midst.' What a great accuracy from God's Word... then they must have bypassed Jesus and gone around His cross which was really a tree to the second miscalled thief" (*Power For Abundant Living*, p. 166).

While the name (Jesus Christ) is the same and some of the historical information is similar, by his own admission Victor Paul Wierwille and The Way, International teach a different Jesus than the one taught by historic, orthodox Christianity. The Jesus of The Way is not God manifest in the Flesh, the second Person of the Trinity, the Word who "was God" (John 1:1). Instead He is a created being, having been created by the Eternal God.

Is this the Jesus of the Bible? ❖



*Victor Paul Wierwille writes: "We did not exist before the world began. Neither did Jesus Christ" (Jesus Christ is Not God, p.32).*

# The Jesus of... The First Church of Christ, Scientist

Rick Branch

**A**nytime an attempt is made to witness to someone in a cult, the first hurdle that must be overcome is the terminology barrier. This is the problem experienced when a Christian uses a term such as *Jesus Christ*, and the cultist uses the same term. Yet these two terms, while they will sound the same to the ear, will have radically different meanings for the two speakers.

The cults use Christian terminology, but they impose their own unique definitions on those terms. Such is the case with Christian Science, a forerunner to many of today's New Age groups.

Christian Science teaches a dualistic nature as it relates to Jesus Christ. It is actually quite simple, anything that is material is unreal and only the spiritual has reality. This helps explain the Christian Science theological understanding of who Jesus is and what Christ is.

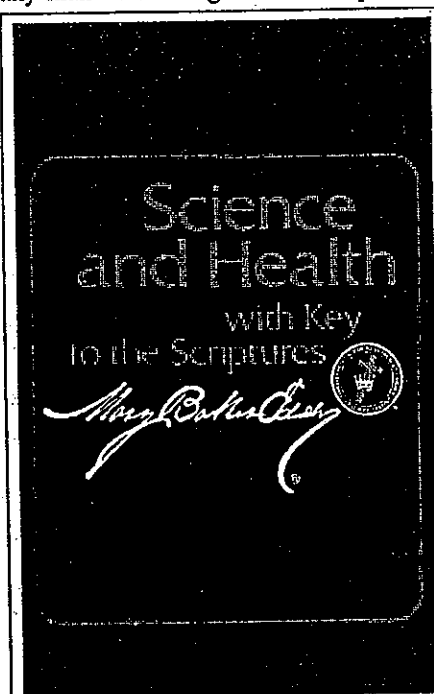
Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, explained this duality in the following way: "The invisible Christ was imperceptible to the so-called personal senses, whereas Jesus appeared as a bodily existence. This dual personality of the unseen and the seen, the spiritual and material, the eternal Christ and the corporeal Jesus manifest in flesh, continued until the Master's ascension, when the human, material concept, or Jesus, disappeared, while the spiritual self, of Christ, continues to exist in the eternal order of divine Science, taking away the sins of the world, as the Christ has always done, even before the human Jesus was incarnate to mortal eyes" (*Science and Health With Key to the Scripture*, p. 334).

Not only does Christian Science separate the *man* Jesus from the *spiritual idea* of Christ, they also deny the biblical truth that Jesus was and is co-equal with God the Father. During her message to The Mother Church, Eddy rejected the fact that Jesus and the Father were one in nature and eternally God as the Bible and historical

Christianity very clearly teach. She explained, "The Christian who believes in the First Commandment is a monotheist: thus he virtually unites with the Jew's belief in one God, and that Jesus Christ is not God, as he himself declared, but the Son of God" (*Message for 1902*, p. 12).

## The Blood of Christ

This dualistic concept has caused Christian Science to completely corrupt the atoning work of Jesus on Calvary's cross: "The material blood of Jesus was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin when it was shed upon 'the accursed tree,' than when it was flowing in his veins as he went daily about his Father's business. ... Jesus presented the ideal of God better than could any man whose origin was less spiritual.



*Mary Baker Eddy's classic book, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, teaches that Jesus came to demonstrate that sin, sickness and death are illusions.*

... The divinity of Christ was made manifest in the humanity of Jesus" (*Science and Health*, p. 25).

## Sin, Sickness an Illusion

If, as Eddy says above, Jesus' blood did not bring freedom from sin, what then is salvation and what was Jesus' purpose for coming to mankind? In her 1887 book, *Unity of Good*, she proclaims, "Salvation is as eternal as God. To mortal thought Jesus appeared as a child, grew to manhood, to suffer before Pilate and on Calvary, because he could reach and teach mankind only through this conformity to mortal conditions; but Soul never saw the Saviour come and go, because the divine idea is always present.

"Jesus came to rescue men from these very illusions to which he seemed to conform: from the illusion which calls sin real, and man a sinner, needing a Saviour; the illusion which calls sickness real, and man as invalid, needing a physician; the illusion that death is as real as Life. From such thoughts — mortal inventions, one and all — Christ Jesus came to save men, through ever-present and eternal good" (pp. 59-60).

If Jesus came not to forgive sin, but to teach its unreality and to expose death as an illusion, then how is Jesus' death on the cross explained? In her magnum opus, Eddy dispelled the myth of Jesus' death. "His disciples believed Jesus to be dead while he was hidden in the sepulchre, whereas he was alive, demonstrating within the narrow tomb the power of Spirit to overrule mortal, material sense" (*Science and Health*, p. 44). Thus, rather than dying on the cross for the forgiveness of sins as the Bible teaches, Jesus was, according to Eddy, actually alive and simply hiding in the tomb.

According to Christian Science, Jesus was not the Christ and His death was an illusion for sins which do not exist. Is this the Jesus of the Bible? ❖

# Is He "Another Jesus"?

## The "Born Again" Jesus of the Word Faith Movement

Clete Hux

**T**herefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The term *born again* has been greatly misinterpreted by various people throughout history. Biblically, however, it means "regeneration, or new birth, an inner recreating of fallen human nature by the gracious sovereign action of the Holy Spirit" (*Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, p. 440). It also involves receiving a new nature and eternal life.

This meaning is intrinsically connected and pertains to the Christian who was "once blind but now sees" — who was "dead in sins and trespasses" but now has been brought to salvation in Christ. Of course, Christians may not fully understand all the implications of the term as it relates to their own salvation experience, but hopefully they will be alert to any misapplication of it or any deviation from the normal orthodox biblical position.

A complete theological understanding of the atonement is not necessary for salvation, but in order to distinguish truth from heresy, one must have a sufficient orientation of the work accomplished on the cross wrought by the *true* Jesus Christ.

Just *any* Jesus is not sufficient! It must be the right Jesus! As Michael Horton points out in *The Agony of Deceit*, "Any teaching that denies Christ is 'the only begotten Son, the One and Only incarnation of God' is heresy" (p. 269; cf. John 3:16, 1:14, 18, 1 John 4:1).

Concerning Christ, Philippians 2:6-7 says, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

Exegetically, verse six means that Christ is of the same nature and essence of

God. It could be paraphrased: who, though of the same nature as God, did not think this something to be exploited to His own advantage. Verse seven says Christ emptied Himself. The Greek *kenosis* (emptying) of Christ during His incarnation does not mean that he relinquished any attributes of His deity, but that He received the limitations of humanity. It could be said that He remained what He ever was (God) and became what He never was (man).

Also, his preincarnate glory (John 17:5) was veiled as He waived some of his divine prerogatives during the time He was on earth (Matthew 24:36), without for one moment ceasing to be God in the flesh. The true Jesus is the eternal Son of God and God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, the *theoanthropos* (the God-man of history), fully God and fully man having two natures (divine and human) within the distinct personality of the Son.

### Jesus Born Again in Hell?

A Jesus who is anything less than what the Scriptures teach is indeed a different Jesus, and the warning ought to be sounded when it is taught that Jesus was *regenerated* in hell. Such is the case with the *born again* Jesus of Word-Faith theology.

Kenneth Copeland, a prominent Word-Faith teacher, in his monthly publication *Believer's Voice of Victory*, related what he claims he was told by Jesus: "Don't be disturbed when people accuse you of thinking you're God. The more you get like Me, the more they're going to think that way of you. They crucified Me for claiming that I was God. But I didn't claim I was God, I just claimed I walked with Him and that He was in Me" (August 1988, p. 8).

The early Gnostic heretic, Cerinthus, taught that Jesus was just a man, becoming divine only at baptism. At the cross, the Holy Spirit left Him, leaving Jesus devoid of His divine nature — once again He was just a man (*Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, Cerinthians, p. 113). Copeland seems to advocate the same thing in the same August 1988 issue of *Believer's Voice of Victory* when he says, "He voluntarily gave up that advantage, living His life here not as God but as a man. He had no innate supernatural powers. He had no ability to perform miracles until after He was anointed by the Holy Spirit as recorded in Luke 3:22."

Frederick K.C. Price, another Word-Faith teacher, affirmed this recently from the Los Angeles Crenshaw Christian Center in his sermon tape, *Free at Last: Redeemed From Poverty, Sickness, and Death*, when he said that he believed in the same Jesus "as the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians or any other Christian denomination" (Tape No. RP-19). However, he went on to say that he was not a heretic, but that Jesus was on the earth "just as a man, not the Son of God" (May 1993).

### Jesus Lost His Divinity?

On 23 October 1992, Paul Crouch of Trinity Broadcasting Network had Benny Hinn on his program discussing the Word-Faith doctrines. As Hinn described Jesus' atonement in hell and being *born again* in hell, Crouch said, "Oh, that's when He [Jesus] regained His divinity" (Video on file at Watchman Fellowship).

It needs to be emphasized that a Jesus who is not fully God and fully man while He was on earth ministering as both God the Son and the Son of Man is not the Jesus of the Bible (1 John 4:1-4). Such a Jesus

cannot possibly atone for the sins of mankind.

To many teachers of the Word-Faith movement, the emphasis is not on the physical death of Jesus, which is what the Bible emphasizes, i.e., "without shedding of blood is no remission" (see Hebrews 9:12, 14, 15, 22), but on the *spiritual death* of Christ.

They also teach that Jesus took on the nature of Satan in His *spiritual death* and in hell completed the plan of redemption and was *born again*.

For instance, Kenneth Hagin, in his book, *The Name of Jesus*, says, "Spiritual death means having Satan's nature" (p. 31). Just prior to that, he said, "Physical death would not remove sins" (p. 29).

Frederick K.C. Price said, "Do you think that the punishment for our sins was to die on a cross? If that were the case, the two thieves could have paid our price. No, the punishment was to go into hell itself and to serve time in hell separated from

God" (*Ever Increasing Faith Messenger*, June 1990, p. 7).

What Kenneth Hagin and Fred Price are alluding to is that it took not only the physical death of Jesus on the cross to pay for our sins, but it also took the spiritual death of Jesus in hell. Kenneth Copeland is very explicit about this. In his sermon tape *What Happened from the Cross to the Throne*, he says, "When Jesus cried, 'It is finished!' He was not speaking of the plan of redemption. There were still three days and nights to go through before He went to the throne."

Regarding Christ's words, "It is finished" (John 19:30), the word in the Greek is *tetelista* and is rendered "to bring to an end" or "paid for in full" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*, p. 101).

What Christ was saying was that the work of redemption (paying for sin and securing salvation) was completed on the cross. If Christ did anything else beyond "It is finished" in order to pay for man's

sins, something is added to His completed work. This is what the Word-Faith teachers have done when they teach that salvation was completed in hell, *after* Christ died on the cross!

## A Word of Encouragement

A word of encouragement about one of the Word-Faith teachers is in order. Benny Hinn, at his Orlando Christian Center, on 14 June 1993, explained, "At one time I taught that Jesus died spiritually. I no longer believe it.... It does not line up with the Word."

Hinn went on to say, "Now, some teach that Jesus went into the underworld, and had to be born again in hell. That does not line up with the Word of God. Even though at once, I believed that too. And the reason that I did is because I was reading materials that really did not line up with this book [the Bible]" (see related stories below).✠

## Benny Hinn

# Repents of "Word Faith" Teachings

Orlando, Fla. (EP) — Evangelist Benny Hinn became a focal point of controversy this year when a cult specialist raised questions about his teaching and reporters questioned his lifestyle. In an interview with *Charisma* magazine editor Stephen Strange, Hinn, pastor of the 7,000-member Orlando Christian Center, discussed his beliefs, and detailed major changes in his views on some controversial issues. "God is shaking me," said Hinn. "He is making dramatic changes inside of me.... The Lord is showing me some things I have been wrong about. At one point I taught certain things, such as the 'little gods' teaching, and Jesus dying spiritually. Now I have quit teaching such things, and I have made it clear that I no longer believe them."

Hinn told *Charisma* that he had modified his views on other issues, including what is sometimes called "name it and claim it" theology. He said, "I don't believe confessing the Word works the way I taught it in the past. Of course, we should believe and confess God's Word. But I don't believe we can just confess any Scripture and make it happen." Though he once taught that Christians are "little gods," Hinn now refutes that doctrine. "I did teach the little gods doctrine," he said. "Today I don't believe it one iota. In fact, it's been erased off all my tapes.... When I taught the little gods doctrine, I was using Scriptures that didn't fit." Hinn said, "The teaching on prosperity has gone too far. It has become a business. It is no longer 'give so you will bless somebody.' It has become 'give to get.' It has become selfish, worldly.... I feel terrible that I once put too much emphasis on material prosperity. And now I am saying, 'Lord, please forgive me.'"

Divine healing is another area where Hinn's beliefs have changed. Though he once taught that anyone with enough faith could be healed, he now describes such a teaching as "cruel" and acknowledges, "I have come to realize that God is sovereign, and there are things I just don't understand." He added, "In the future, rather than focus on healing, I plan to focus on Jesus Himself, and let Him heal whomever He wills to heal."

[Ed. Note: At press time the latest *Christianity Today* carried an additional update on Hinn's repudiation of "Word Faith" doctrine. The magazine reports that Hinn's change of heart was prompted in part by meetings with Hank Hanegraaff, president of Christian Research Institute, and evangelist James Robison. Perucci Ferraiuolo, author of the article, notes that Hinn has been the subject of recent media scrutiny from *Cornerstone* magazine, *The Quarterly Journal*, published by Personal Freedom Outreach, and TV's *Inside Edition*. *Christianity Today* also noted that Hinn linked some of his old doctrine to Pantheism. Hinn told his "jolted and teary-eyed congregation.... 'The word-of-faith message is New Age and it doesn't work'" (*Christianity Today*, 16 August 1993, p. 38).]



# The Index View

R. Albert Mohler Jr.  
Editor



## Why Easter Matters: Christianity As Resurrection Faith

Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This comes on no less authority than the Apostle Paul. If Christ is not raised, then our faith is in vain and we remain in our sins. But, if Christ is risen—if He is the victor over the grave rather than its victim—then those who place their trust in Him will share also in His victory.

Easter and Christmas put the Church on the line. The watching world looks to see just what message the Christian Church will proclaim. The world has done all within its power to tame Christmas—to reduce the scandal and glory of the Incarnation to a consumerist fantasy and sentimentality. Anything but the God of the ages in human flesh! The Church has sometimes aided and abetted this attempt by joining in the sentimentalizing of the Christmas story. But, with the exception of die-hard secularists and the American Civil Liberties Union, who hates a nativity scene?

Easter is different. There is no sentimentalism here; no baby nuzzled in a manger. Easter resists the hijacking the world annually attempts at Christmas. The chicks and bunnies and eggs—remnants of ancient fertility cults—look foolish even to the unbelieving world. For the believer and the unbeliever alike, the problem is the empty tomb.

Secular rebuttals of resurrection faith are nothing new. Modern liberalism has come up with no arguments the Sanhedrin did not invent within hours of the resurrection event. Paul had heard them all before—he had made all the arguments himself. The disciples stole the body. The disciples misplaced the body. They were either lying, drunk, or deluded. Or, in an argument which must have seemed unspeakably absurd to those who witnessed the crucifixion, He had not really died.

But then came an encounter on the Damascus road. Paul the oppressor and prosecutor of Christians was confronted with the risen Lord. Not with the lifeless body of Christ, not with a resuscitated Christ—but with the glorified and resurrected Christ.

When Paul wrote to Timothy that "I know whom I have believed" he wrote from personal knowledge. And when he wrote to the Corinthian church concerning the power and reality of the resurrection, he wrote with the confidence of one who had seen the risen Lord, and found salvation in Him. If Christ is not raised, Christianity is a monstrous lie foisted on gullible humanity. But, Paul wrote, we know that He is risen.

Easter matters because the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the sign of His

victory over sin and death. Had He remained in the tomb, the powers of death would have been greater than the power of life. But since Jesus has been raised, we know that He is not only our Savior, but the first-fruits of all who believe. His resurrection is the sign of our own resurrection. Breaking the bonds of death and sin, Christ not only died for our sins, according to the Scriptures—He also rose as the sign of our victory in Him, and the gift of eternal life. He is our Savior by virtue of His substitutionary death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

Easter matters because the resurrected Christ is now Lord of all. Surpassing the richness of any other Christological title, to confess Jesus as Lord is to acknowledge His universal rulership over all things living and dead, created and uncreated. At His name every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. As Peter preached to Jerusalem, this same Jesus, whom you crucified, God has raised from the dead.

Easter matters because it is the risen Christ who rules over the Church and has given the Church its missionary commission. Only after the resurrection did Jesus tell His disciples, "All authority under heaven and earth is granted to Me," and send them out to all the nations.

Missiologist Johannes Blauw called the resurrection "The Great Turning-Point." After calling men and women unto Himself during His earthly ministry, Christ would now send them out into the world. The Lord of all would now claim the worlds as His dominion, and send His disciples out to all the earth.

The empty tomb is a scandal to the world. If the gospel of the resurrected Christ is true, then the world must forfeit all its comfortable paganisms and bow at the name of Jesus. In recent years, some churches have done more apologizing for the empty tomb than proclaiming it.

But a resurrection-less Christianity is no Christianity at all. Christ was bodily raised from the dead or we are eternally dead. He ascended to the Father and now reigns as Lord, or we are without hope. A church which preaches a gospel without resurrection is apostate. Rather than preaching the scandal of the gospel it has become a scandal to the gospel.

But the Church which boldly proclaims the truth of the risen Lord offers the only true message of salvation. It knows what those who place their trust in the risen Christ have come to know: Jesus Saves ... Easter matters.

## The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

### (A Historical and Theological Analysis)

#### I. Introduction:

The importance and centrality of the resurrection of Jesus has been repeatedly recognized by numerous theologians (cf. Acts 17:30-31).

Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord, p. 191, "From the standpoint of an apologetic for Christian theology, belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God stands or falls with the question of His bodily resurrection."

John Frederick Jansen, The Resurrection of Jesus Christ in New Testament Theology, p. 13, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the starting point for the Christian church and for the writing of the New Testament. The unity of New Testament faith lies in its confession that the crucified Jesus is the Son of God in power and the Lord of life through his resurrection from the dead."

Thiessen, p. 331, "It is the Fundamental Doctrine of Christianity. Many admit the necessity of the death of Christ who deny the importance of the bodily resurrection of Christ. But that Christ's physical resurrection is vitally important is evident from the fundamental connection of this doctrine with Christianity. In 1 Cor. 15:12-19 Paul shows that everything stands or falls with Christ's bodily resurrection: Apostolic preaching is vain, the Corinthians' faith is vain, the apostles are false witnesses, the Corinthians are yet in their sins, those fallen asleep in Christ have perished, and Christians are of all men most miserable, if Christ has not risen."

Grass, "If there is one link (in the chain of saving events) which really bears the weight, or to alter the picture - if there is a link on which the whole chain is hung, it is, so far as the New Testament is concerned, the Resurrection."

Koch, "On the whole it is clear that the Easter event is the central point of the New Testament message. Resurrection by God and appearance to his disciples form the basis of the New Testament witness to Christ; it is from this standpoint that the New Testament is written."

Ramsey, The Resurrection of Christ, "For them (the first disciples) the Gospel without the Resurrection was not merely a Gospel without its final chapter; it was not a Gospel at all ... Christian theism is Resurrection-theism."

Rengstorff, p. 37, "The Resurrection is the presupposition of the emergence of the Church ... the basis of the specifically Christian belief in God ... of the Christian concern with man's life in the world."

Schweizer, Lordship and Discipleship, "What happened at Easter overwhelmed the Church to such an extent that it dominated all its thought and became the very centre of all its preaching."

## II. A Historical Investigation

### Our Options

1. A great hoax (The resurrection is false)
2. A nice mythology (The resurrection is fiction)
3. The supreme event of history (The resurrection is fact)

#### A. Naturalistic Theories of the 19th century Liberals

1. Swoon (He did not actually die)
2. Spirit (His spirit returned but not his body)
3. Vision (The Disciples hallucinated)
4. Legend/Myth (Quite popular today: Just a nice story with a teaching point. A real Jesus is not necessary, but useful and certainly probable).
5. Stolen Body, by: a) Jews b) Romans c) Disciples Matt. 28:11-15 d) Joseph of Arimathea John 19:38 ff.
6. Wrong Tomb
7. Deliberate Lie for Profit
8. Mistaken Identity (They confused Jesus for someone who looked like Him)
9. Twin theory (He had an identical brother)

These theories are rarely held today, with even liberal scholars opting for different positions or perspectives.

#### B. Contemporary Models of the Resurrection

1. The facticity of the resurrection is seriously questioned or dismissed. The nature of the original eyewitnesses' experience cannot be ascertained (Ex. Bultmann, Marxsen, Koester, Kung, Van Buren).
2. A literal resurrection may be true but it cannot be historically verified. The important element is the nature of the disciples experience, and the truth that the resurrection can only be accepted by faith (Ex. K. Barth, Brunner, Bonhoeffer, Bornkamm, Rahner, M. Barth and Torrance).
3. A resurrection is probable and an abstract reconstruction of the historical nature of the appearances is possible. The empty tomb is viewed as the best explanation of the available data. However, it is still argued that the resurrection is an eschatological event and is not demonstrable by historical methodology, although it may possibly be verified in the future (Ex. Grass-Christ appeared in a spiritual form; Moltmann-the disciples witnessed visionary appearances of the risen Lord). Jesus' appearances, then, were more along the lines of private revelations (also included here are R. Fuller, Jeremias, O'Collins). Again, such appearances cannot be know except in faith.

4. A literal resurrection of Jesus and an empty tomb is the most probable solution based upon available data. (Ex. Pannenberg). Yet Pannenberg rejects a corporeal resurrection body in favor of a spiritual body which appeared from heaven, was recognized as Jesus spoke, and in Paul's case, was accompanied by a phenomenon of light (Also A. M. Hunter, R. Brown, J. D. G. Dunn, L. Goppelt and A. M. Ramsey).
5. A literal bodily resurrection of Jesus and an empty tomb is the best solution of the Easter event based upon the evidence. This position differs from number four in its affirmation of a "resurrected body." This is the classic orthodox position, and the one affirmed by evangelicals (significant contributions come from Ladd, Craig, Osborne, D. Fuller, Gundry and Geisler).

\* Point of clarification: Habermas points out,

Having very briefly delineated this last point, it must now be admitted that it is sometimes very difficult to ascertain who holds to this specific concept of Jesus' resurrection body and who does not. Some of the scholars whom we have already discussed also hold that Jesus was raised bodily. This appears to be clear, for example, in the works of K. Barth and T. Torrance. M. Barth, Goppelt, and Ramsey likewise make this point, but at least the last two regard the view taken by Luke and John as being too drastic.

C. An Apologetic for the Evangelical Model of a Literal, Historical Bodily Resurrection

Habermas again makes a number of important observation with respect to the contemporary scene:

Today, most critical theologians find much less history in the gospels than their 19th-century counterparts, to be sure. Yet, a substantial number of historical facts are recognized with regard to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Virtually all scholars today agree that Jesus died by crucifixion and that his body was afterwards buried. Due to his death, his disciples were despondent, believing that all hope was gone. At this point many contemporary scholars add that the burial tomb was found empty a few days later, but that it did not cause belief in the disciples.

It is virtually unanimous that, soon afterwards, the disciples had experiences which they were convinced were appearances of the risen Jesus. These experiences transformed their lives as they believed that Jesus was literally alive. These experiences also emboldened them to preach and witness in Jerusalem, the very city where Jesus had been crucified and buried only a short time previously. Here it was the message of Jesus'

resurrection which was the central proclamation for these eyewitnesses.

History also relates that, due to this testimony, the Christian church grew, featuring Sunday as the primary day of worship. Some scholars add here that one of the early church leaders was James, the brother of Jesus, who was a skeptic until he believed he saw the risen Jesus. Basically all agree that a persecutor of the church, Saul of Tarsus, was converted to Christianity by an experience which he also believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus.

These are a minimum number of facts agreed upon by almost all critical scholars who study this topic, whatever their school of thought. From this summary, at least eleven separate facts can be considered to be knowable history (while another is additionally recognized by many): (1) Jesus died due to crucifixion and (2) was buried afterwards. (3) Jesus' death caused the disciples to experience despair and lose hope, believing that their master was dead. (4) Although not as widely accepted, many scholars acknowledge several weighty arguments which indicate that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered to be empty just a few days later.

Almost all critical scholars further agree that (5) the disciples had real experiences which they thought were literal appearances of the risen Jesus. Due to these experiences, (6) the disciples were transformed from timid and troubled doubters afraid to identify themselves with Jesus to bold preachers of his death and resurrection who were more than willing to die for their faith in him. (7) This message was the center of preaching in the earliest church and (8) Was especially proclaimed in Jerusalem, the same city where Jesus had recently died and had been buried.

As a direct result of this preaching (9) the church was born, (10) Featuring Sunday as the special day of worship. (11) James, a brother of Jesus who had been a skeptic, was converted when he believed that he saw the resurrected Jesus. (12) A few years later, Paul was also converted to the Christian faith by an experience which he, likewise, thought was an appearance of the risen Jesus.

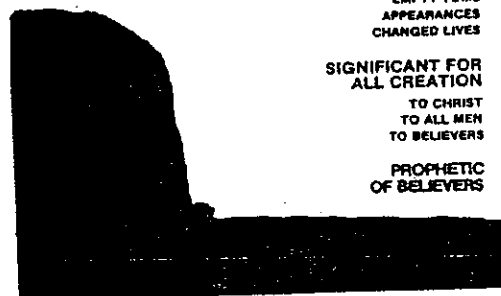
## **Resurrection of Christ**

HISTORICALLY ESTABLISHED AS FACT

EMPTY TOMB  
APPEARANCES  
CHANGED LIVES

SIGNIFICANT FOR  
ALL CREATION  
TO CHRIST  
TO ALL MEN  
TO BELIEVERS

PROPHETIC  
OF BELIEVERS



Such facts are crucial in terms of our contemporary investigation of Jesus' resurrection. With the possible exception of the empty tomb, the great majority of critical scholars who study this subject agree that these are the minimal historical facts surrounding this event. As such, any conclusions concerning the historicity of the resurrection should at least properly account for them.

Now, it needs to be carefully noted that the actual resurrection of Jesus, in the sense of his exit from the tomb, is nowhere narrated in the NT. The teaching that he actually rose from the dead was a conclusion drawn from the fact that he had literally died, followed by his appearances in a transformed body to numerous individuals and groups.

Given this framework, the following is set forth as evidence for a literal, historical, bodily resurrection.

#### TYPES OF EVIDENCES FOR THE RESURRECTION

- A. Subjective (Personal Experience): also called the pragmatic test. It asks the questions: Does it work?; Does Jesus make a difference?
- B. Objective (Historically verifiable evidence): verifiable according to a historical, not a scientific criteria. Verifiable in a probable sense, not absolute, improbable, or impossible sense. It asks the question: "Does the evidence persuade us that the event actually happened? Ex. George Washington becoming the first President of America."

### *Stop For A Look At Calvary*

General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, visited the Holy Land in 1905. There he climbed Mount Calvary, and on his knees he unfurled the Army flag. With tears streaming down his cheeks, he softly repeated this stanza of Isaac Watts' well-known hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross":

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

When we look back to that old rugged cross "on which the Prince of glory died," we should be willing without hesitation to give our souls, our lives, our all!



"The cross is the only ladder high enough to touch Heaven's threshold."  
—G. D. Boardman

### SPECIFIC EVIDENCES

1. Naturalistic theories fail to explain away the event and have been disproved or rejected (even by liberal scholarship).
2. It does work and meet genuine needs (subjective evidence).
3. The birth and continuance of Christianity with the central message of the resurrection.
4. The change in the day of Worship from the Sabbath to Sunday by Jews.
5. Testified to have been seen by women first, inspite of the invalid nature of their witness in the first century.
6. Radical change in the disciples.
  - A. New power
  - B. New courage
  - C. Faithful to death
7. Moral character of the eyewitnesses.
8. Empty tomb/no body.
9. Numerous and various resurrection appearances.
10. Unlikely nature of mass hallucination.
11. Reported appearances which lasted 40 days then completely stopped for all.
12. The 50 day interval between the resurrection and the proclamation at Pentecost (Acts 2) in Jerusalem itself.
13. Multitude of fulfilled Old Testament prophecies (see previous lecture).
14. The Jewish leaders could not disprove the message.
15. Conversion of two skeptics: James and Paul.
16. Accepted character and claims of Jesus.

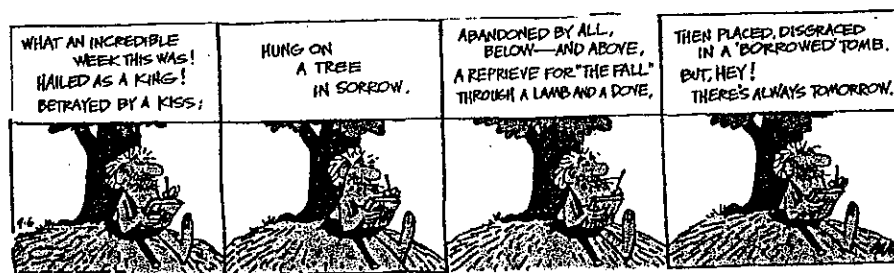
He claimed to be God (John 8:58; 10:30; 14:9)

He claimed He would rise (Matt. 16:21)

C. S. Lewis said, "He is either Lord, Liar or Lunatic. He let us no other options."

17. Articles left in the empty tomb (John 20:5 ff.).
18. Unexpected nature of the resurrection.
19. Reliable eyewitness documents recording the facts.

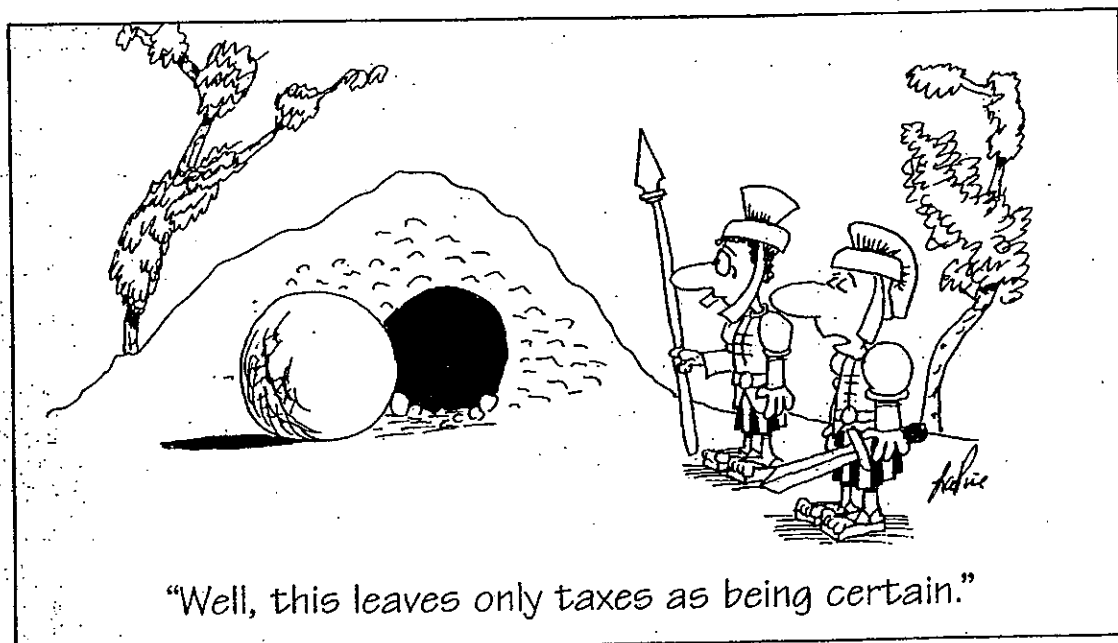
The New Testament is the most well authenticated document from the ancient world. There are more manuscripts of the New Testament of an earlier date and more reliable nature than for any other book from antiquity. The following chart summarizes the evidence.



## RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS

AUTHOR/ BOOK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME GAP	NO. OF COPIES
Homer, <u>Iliad</u>	800 B.C.			643
Herodotus, <u>History</u>	400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs.	8
Thucydides, <u>History</u>	400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs.	8
Plato	400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs.	7
Demosthenes	300 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400 yrs.	200
Aristotle	300 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400 yrs.	5
Caesar, <u>Gallic Wars</u>	100 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000 yrs.	10
Livy, <u>Roman History</u>	Time of Christ	A.D. 900	900 yrs.	20
Tacitus, <u>Annals</u>	A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs.	20
Pliny, <u>History</u>	A.D. 100	A.D. 900	800 yrs.	7
New Testament	A.D. 100	A.D. 200	A.D. 100	5300

- A. The New Testament books were written at an early date.
- B. The New Testament records have been substantiated by archaeological discoveries.
- C. The New Testament records have been confirmed by other early historical records.
- D. The New Testament records have been confirmed by legal analysis.
- E. Secular historians (some) recognize the authenticity of the New Testament records.





# 10 APPEARANCES OF JESUS BETWEEN HIS RESURRECTION AND HIS ASCENSION

Appearances	Witnesses
1) MARK 16: 9-11, JOHN 20: 11-18	MARY MAGDALENE
2) MATTHEW 28: 1-10	OTHER WOMEN
3) LUKE 24:34, 1 CORINTHIANS 15:5	PETER
4) MARK 16: 12,13; LUKE 24: 13-35	TWO DISCIPLES ON EMMANUS ROAD
5) MARK 16: 14; LUKE 24: 36-43; JOHN 20: 19-25	TEN APOSTLES
6) JOHN 20: 26-31; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:5	ELEVEN APOSTLES
7) JOHN 21: 1-22	SEVERAL APOSTLES
8) MATTHEW 28: 16-20; MARK 16: 15-18; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:6	THE APOSTLES AND MORE THAN 500 DISCIPLES
9) 1 CORINTHIANS 15:7	JAMES, JESUS' HALF- BROTHER
10) MARK 16:19; LUKE 24: 44-49; ACTS 1: 4-8	THE DISCIPLES

## The Significance of Jesus' Resurrection

"Thus, if, *par impossibile*, the corpse of a man was actually resuscitated, this would be just as relevant to my salvation as an existing self or person as that the carpenter next door just drove a nail in a two-by-four, or that American technicians have at last been successful in recovering a nose cone that had been first placed in orbit around the earth."

—Schubert Ogden  
Perkins School of Theology (SMU)  
Christ Without Myth (1961), p. 136

"... and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins."

—Paul the Apostle  
1 Corinthians 15:17

### III. Theological Implications of the Resurrection (1 Cor. 15)

#### 1. The idea of resurrection

The biblical concept is most commonly by anastasis (from anistēmi). Egeirō, frequently used in the N.T., also conveys the idea of rising from the dead.

The English term comes from the latin resurgere, "to rise again." Beyond this definition 1 Corinthians and orthodox doctrine would emphasize the nuance of bodily resurrection from death, since the term in its breadth can refer to reappearances of various kinds.

The uniqueness of Christ's resurrection should be emphasized as well.

1. Toynbee, whose concern in Study of History is Christian pagan parallels, does not advance even correspondences at this point.
2. There have always been some who deny the fact.
  - A. D. F. Strauss in Leben Jesu (1835-36) conjectures that it must have come from first century legend.
  - B. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in Kerygma and Myth says, "The resurrection itself is not an event of past history ... The real Easter faith is faith in the word of preaching. If the event of Easter Day is in any sense an historical event additional to the event of the cross, it is nothing else than the rise of faith in the risen Lord, since it was this faith which led to the apostolic preaching."

#### 2. The audience of the passage; the contextual denial of bodily resurrection in principle, 15:12-19

Some (unknown by identity and reason; Greek philosophy with dualistic emphasis upon the immortality of the soul alone) of the readers were denying the resurrection of Christ on the basis of a rejection of bodily resurrection in principle.

Paul argues that the resurrection is logically necessary for the Christian faith. He argues twice (14 = 16-17) with emphatic repetition that faith without resurrection is vain. The core of his argumentation (15, between the two repetitions) is that denial of resurrection is tantamount to accusing the apostles and ultimately God of being liars.

- A. If there is no bodily resurrection of the dead, then Christ could not have been raised,
- B. Logical implications of the conclusion:
  1. Preaching and personal faith would be shams, The powerlessness of preaching stems from its lack of substance, for power is not in volume or charisma but in the content of the risen Christ.
  2. Apostolic testimony would be false, and personal faith would be fruitless (emphatic repetition), 15-17. Faith would be

fruitless, because there would be no power over sin through our risen and living Christ (17, cf. Rom. 6:1-11). Thus, the utter necessity of resurrection for spiritual life.

3. "Sleeping" Christians would be dead in an absolute (or annihilationist) sense, 18.
4. Living Christians should be pitied for their deluded hope. 19.

## RESURRECTION REALITY

1 COR. 15:1-28

### I) HISTORICAL

### THE GOSPEL

Proof

Buried

Christ died *According*

*to*

Was raised *Scripture* Witness of many

### II) LOGICAL

**IF**

No Resurrection

**THEN**

No Resurrection of Christ  
Apostles Hucksters

Corinthians Salvation Imaginary

Dead Believers Doomed

Pagans Correct



A  
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### 3. EXPOSITION OF THE PASSAGE

#### A. The importance of the resurrection, 15:1-34

[The foundational importance of resurrection to the validity of Christianity is established in the core of the chapter, 12-19. Now that logical necessity is applied to doctrine.]

1. Its priority in the gospel, 15:1-11 (from the perspective of their past, 1-2 with 11; Paul starts from where they are as misguided believers).

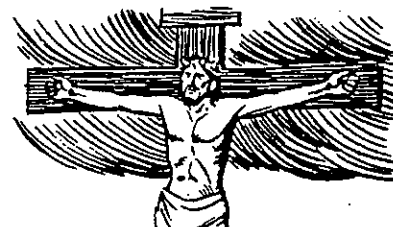
- A. Their relationship to the gospel, 1-2, 11
1. Which Paul preached
  2. Which they received
  3. Which they affirm
  4. Which saves them (present tense = the progressive aspect of salvation; the contextual implication is that they have missed or have not applied this implication of the gospel)
- B. The content of the gospel, 3-10  
["of first importance"]
1. Christ died for our sins, 3a
    - a. According to the Scriptures, 3b
    - b. Proven by His burial, 4a
  2. Christ was raised on the third day, 4b
    - a. According to the Scriptures, 4c
    - b. Proven by His appearances, 5-11
      1. Cephas, 5a
      2. The twelve, 5b
      3. 500 witnesses, 6
      4. James, 7a
      5. All apostles, 7b
      6. Paul, 8-10

There are two sets of witness in parallel structure: key witnesses (Cephas, James), apostolic witnesses (twelve, apostles), and living witnesses (+500, Paul).

## **WHAT HE DID: The Conquering One**

### **I. HISTORICALLY**

- a. Triumphal Entry
- b. Trials
- c. Death on Cross
- d. Burial
- e. Resurrection
- f. Coming Again



# The life of Jesus

According to Rev. Weston Stevens

By JEANNE PUGH

St. Petersburg Times

Jesus of Nazareth was a remarkably creative man of great sensitivity, imagination and understanding. His teachings touched on multiple levels of human experience, from love to anger, from justice to reason. He set the standard for human behavior and gave his life in defense of that standard. But he was not God, and he never intended to found a new religion.

So concludes Rev. Weston Stevens in his new book, *Jesus: As We Knew Him*, a small (135 pages) volume published recently by John Alden Books of Rochester, N.Y. Stevens is minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of St. Petersburg and a past president of the Greater St. Petersburg Clergy Association.

Stevens believes that taking the divinity away from Jesus does not diminish the importance of the message he gave to the world. But he acknowledges that such a position puts him at odds with most of his colleagues in the Christian ministry.

With this awareness in mind, Stevens has exhibited particular courage in putting his beliefs in print. He realizes that Christian fundamentalists could become so incensed by his conclusions that he runs a strong risk of being ostracized and condemned. Others may be led to argue badly against him in which case, he says, "they will at least have to justify their points of view."

But what is more likely, he acknowledges, is that the book will be completely ignored. Stevens seems to have no illusions about that — which is too bad, considering the worth of insight the book contains.

Stevens roots his assumptions about Jesus, his contemporaries and the society in which they lived in what is known and generally accepted about the history of that era. To this he adds details from the Bible, assuming that most of the historical data there also is true. What he

Copies of *Jesus: As We Knew Him*, by Weston A. Stevens (\$3.95 in paperback), are available at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 719 Arlington Ave., St. Petersburg, or by writing to John Alden Books, P.O. Box 20666, Rochester, N.Y. 14623. Add \$1.50 for postage and handling if ordered from Rochester.

dismisses are the supernatural embellishments that he believes were woven into the story by well-intentioned gospel writers who felt — and perhaps with some justification — he says — that the message of Jesus would be lost if it were presented without some ethereal elements.

The Jesus portrayed by Stevens is a considerably different character than Christian tradition has led most believers to envision. He is pictured

not as a man of lowly origins who rises to prominence simply because of the message he conveys. Jesus, he points out, had an aristocratic background, which tended to lend some authority to his teaching. As the first-born son of Joseph, he was probably a prominent citizen of Nazareth, in addition to being a direct descendant of King David and the rightful heir to the title "King of the Jews."

Stevens surmises that Joseph had been called from his ancestral home in Bethlehem of Judea to Nazareth, a backwater town in Galilee, by King Herod, the hard-picked puppet of the Roman rulers of Palestine. As a man of noble heritage and many talents, however, Joseph was able to build up a prosperous carpentry business in Nazareth and occupied a position of high status within the Jewish community.

Stevens believes that the story of Jesus' birth was distorted, both by the writer of the Gospel According to John (the only one of the four

## Stevens theorizes that Jesus survived the crucifixion

Among the many theories presented in his new book, *Jesus: As We Knew Him*, Rev. Weston Stevens even finds a rational explanation for the most significant miracle of Jesus — and the one that most theologians agree is the linchpin of the faith — the Resurrection. But the scenario he proposes may seem as far-fetched to the believer as the story of divine intervention in Jesus' life appears to non-believers.

Jesus, surmises Stevens, survives the crucifixion and is unconscious, but barely alive, when taken to the tomb outside Jerusalem. During the night that follows, he regains consciousness and, although critically wounded, is able to creep out of the tomb and wrap himself in a gardener's cloak found nearby. When the three Marys arrive shortly after dawn and discover the open tomb, two of them run immediately to inform the followers of Jesus that his body has been stolen.

Mary Magdalene, consumed in grief, remains nearby, "blinded by her tears." When she sees Jesus in the gardener's cloak, she does not recognize him until he pulls back the hood and speaks to her. She wants to stay with him and tend to his wounds, but he says no, the authorities will soon come looking for him. He asks her to tell the disciples to meet him at a certain place in Galilee and then starts out along the road north.

Once out of the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, Jesus hobbles along the road without being recognized. (This was before television, photography or even composite sketches, and only those few who had known him well would be likely to recognize this very sick man in a gardener's cloak.)

The couple Jesus meets along the way do not realize who he is until they have

gospels that equates Jesus with God) and by subsequent theological supposition nurtured primarily by the Apostle Paul, who never met Jesus.

Stevens concedes that Jesus was probably "born of a virgin" — but, at that time in Jewish history, any young woman who was unmarried was referred to as a virgin. Mary, the Bible records, was engaged, but not yet married, to Joseph when she became pregnant. (Stevens, although he does not mention this in the two reports, was that Jesus was of legitimate noble lineage.

intimate relations between engaged couples were common, if not always accepted, in that society.)

Stevens notes also that, if the gospel writers had intended to convey the idea that Jesus had no earthly father, they would not have recorded his genealogy, which is traced from Joseph back to Abraham (in Matthew) and from Joseph to Adam (in Luke). What the gospel writers wanted to make clear, even though there are inconsistencies in the two reports, was that Jesus was of legitimate noble lineage.

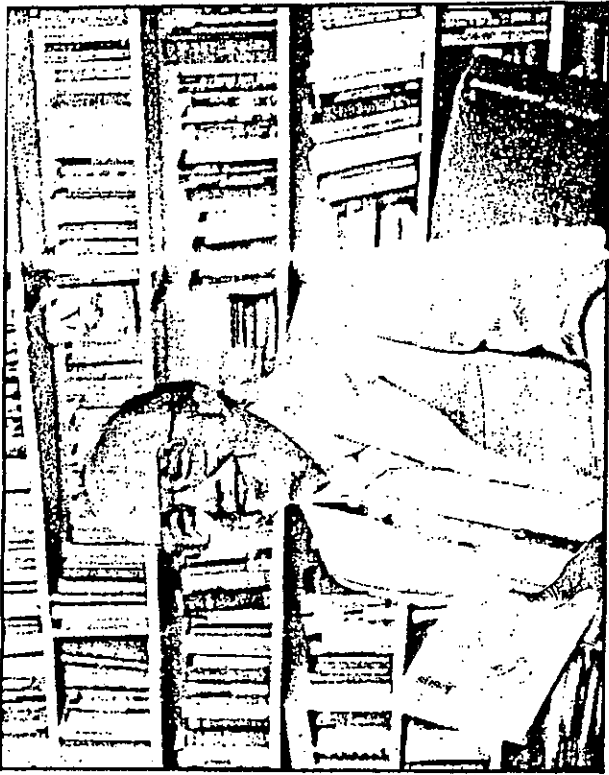
The birth of Jesus took place at a time when the Roman authorities were tightening their grip on the population of Palestine, causing much unrest in the Jewish community. The census ordered by Rome made it necessary for Joseph to return to Bethlehem in order to affirm his right place in the lineage of David. Joseph and Mary probably traveled to Bethlehem in cognito to avoid confrontation with the authorities. But their status could not be hidden once they arrived. Turned away by the innkeeper, the couple found refuge in the stable where Jesus was born.

News of the arrival of this heir apparent to the Jewish throne would have traveled swiftly. And Herod, concerned about maintaining his tenuous position as king and no stranger to cruel acts of oppression, ordered his troops to kill all male infants under the age of 2 — a late Jesus escaped when his parents fled with him to Egypt. Herod's action, Stevens says, was prompted not by any concern about the appearance of a divinely commissioned Jewish messiah but by his genuine fear of legitimate challengers to his worldly power.

Stevens maintains this kind of Jesus throughout his book. He finds logical, rational explanations for nearly all of the phenomena associated with the man from Galilee. Peter, he suggests, assumed Jesus was "walking on water" when he saw him from a distance walking along the edge of the Sea of Galilee. The miracle of the "feeding of the 5,000," Stevens says, was an exam-

ple of Jesus' compassion. The modern-day examples he lists: Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mother Teresa.

"Certainly I would not have spent all those years studying and worshipping Jesus if I didn't feel the extraordinary humanness of the man," he said. "His life suggests that we all stand a chance of having some of the same qualities he had — that there is a spark of the divine in each of us."



St. Petersburg Times — DEAN SMITH  
In his book, *Jesus: As We Knew Him*, Rev. Weston Stevens uses a story to show that although Jesus of Nazareth was an enlightened man, he was not divine.

the or what can happen even today when one person steps forward to help in a difficult situation. The boy who offered his five loaves of bread and two fishes inspired others in the crowd to share what they had and, behold, the first Christian "potluck supper" appeared.

As for the reports of healings performed by Jesus, Stevens attributes these to "psychoanalytic ministrations." Even today, he says, a large number of illnesses are being traced to mental, emotional or psychological problems — and Jesus was a master at assessing such problems and getting to the root of them. (Stevens said this week that a series of healing services will begin soon at his church in the belief that healings of many illnesses are possible by tapping certain energies in the human psyche.)

Stevens believes the most factual account of Jesus' life appears in Mark, which was written about 40 years after Jesus' death and portrays him in very human terms. Matthew, written about 60 years after the crucifixion, embellishes the story by tying events to prophecies from the Old Testament and "re-creating the messianic image" to Jesus. Luke provides a more sophisticated picture of Jesus in an attempt to make his image more attractive to non-Jews. And John, written about A.D. 110, "upgrades" Jesus to deity.

"The gospel writers," says Stevens, "shaded their portraits of Jesus according to their interests, needs, pressures and theological concerns. What they wanted to believe became truth."

Subsequently, he contends, Christianity grew because of the hunger throughout the Roman Empire for "some sort of salvation, some meaning" in human life. The faith "did not come miraculously in the night from the angels. It developed naturally the way all things in history do. It evolved slowly out of Judaism. Jesus didn't realize that he was starting a new religion any more than Paul (the apostle who carried the message to the western world) realized he was founding a new church."

Stevens said this week that his conclusions, after 30 years of studying Christian theology, have not lessened his reverence for Jesus and what his life represents. He believes, he said, that the mysticism, or divinity, in Jesus is that same element that has shaped the lives of those few human beings in history who seem to stand out for their exceptional understanding and compassion. Among the modern-day examples he lists: Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mother Teresa.

"Certainly I would not have spent all those years studying and worshipping Jesus if I didn't feel the extraordinary humanness of the man," he said. "His life suggests that we all stand a chance of having some of the same qualities he had — that there is a spark of the divine in each of us."

## II. THEOLOGICALLY

### a. Redemption TOWARD SIN



### b. Propitiation TOWARD GOD

### c. Reconciliation TOWARD MEN



2. Its priority in biblical doctrine, 15:20-28 (from the perspective of their future, taking up the concept of hope in v. 19).

A. Christ is the resurrected first-fruit of God's people, 20-24.

1. The incarnate Christ as man overcame Adam's curse by resurrection, 20-22.
2. "Those who are Christ's" will overcome death at His parousia, 23-24.

B. Christ is the resurrected Lord of creation, 25-28.

1. The resurrected Christ will overcome all enemies as the conqueror of death, 25-26.
2. The sovereign Son will subject Himself to the Father as the supreme recipient of glory, 27-28.

[Again, the trinitarian unity in all matters is emphasized; all things will be subjected to the Son who will then subject them to the Father to the all-encompassing glory of God, cf. Phil. 2:11]

3. Its priority in Christian living, 15:29-34; the apostle has moved from faith [12-19] to hope [20-28] and now to love [29-34, cf. 13:13].

[It appears that this difficult passage is an apologetical use of their false practice to show the absurdity of their denial of the resurrection].

- A. Why do they practice "baptism of the dead" as if resurrection life could be vicariously communicated, 29?
- B. Why do godly, loving Christians like Paul jeopardize this life if no future life is involved (cf. vs. 19), 30-32?
- C. Why must Christians not fellowship with those who behave as if there is no resurrection (cf. vs. 32), 33-34? The idea is that if there is no future, then we should "get the most out of the present (without restraint)!"

B. The nature of resurrection, 15:35-49

[This passage takes up the objection of v. 12]

1. The objection of the absurdity of bodily resurrection, 35.
2. The refutations from analogies in the natural order, 36-41.

A. The answer of the PRINCIPLE OF TRANSFORMATION (there is transformation of kind in creation) as defense of the fact that the same kind can have a new form (versus their false premise), 36-38

1. The living seed must be sown, 36
2. The buried seed is transformed, 37

[Grain was the symbol of immortality in the Greek mysteries, esp. the Eleusinian; initiation brought magical identification (epopteia) with its life, death, and rebirth!]

3. The transformations are God-ordained, 38 (not magically effected!)

B. The answer of the PRINCIPLE OF VARIATION (there is variation within kinds in creation) as defense of the fact that the same kind can have different bodies (versus their false premise), 39-41

1. The variation in flesh, 39
  - a. Men and beasts
  - b. Fowl and fish
2. The variation in glory, 40-41
  - a. Heavenly and earthly bodies (seemingly animate bodies as angels and men)
  - b. Sun, moon, and stars

3. The application to resurrection from the dead, 42-49

A. The contrasts between the present body and the resurrection body, 42-44

1. Perishable - imperishable
2. Dishonor - glory
3. Weakness - power
4. Natural - spiritual

B. The contrasts between the first Adam and the last Adam, 45-49

1. The principle of chronological succession, 45-46
2. The principle of federal succession, 47-49

- a. Earthly vs. heavenly in origin
- b. Earthly vs. heavenly in nature
- c. Earthly vs. heavenly in destiny

C. The subjects of (heavenly) resurrection, 15:50-58

[This passage answers the question, "Who inherits the glorious destiny of v. 49.]

1. The earthly body will not enter the heavenly inheritance, 50.
2. The believers's bodies will be transformed to their heavenly bodies (consistent with the principles above), 51-53.
  - A. The mysterious change
  - B. The momentary change
    1. From perishable to imperishable
    2. From mortal to immortal (cf. 42-44)
3. The new body will accomplish victory over death, 54-58. (cf. 23-24)
  - A. As anticipated in prophecy (Isa. 25:8), 54
  - B. As celebrated in prophecy, 55
  - C. As achieved by Christ, 56-57
  - D. As expressed in Christian living, 58 (cf. 30-34)

## 1 COR. 15

mark the seven transition-features of that coming resurrection:

1. It is sown in "corruption"; it is raised in "incorruption."
2. It is sown in "dishonour"; it is raised in "glory."
3. It is sown in "weakness"; it is raised in "power."
4. It is sown a "physical" body; raised a "pneumatical" body.
5. It is sown an "earthly" body; it is raised a "heavenly" body.
6. It is sown a "flesh-and-blood" body; raised a "changed" body.
7. It is sown a "mortal" body; it is raised an "immortal" body.



## CONCLUSIONS

1. 1 Corinthians 15 emphasizes the importance and nature of Christ's resurrection. The validity of the Christian faith rests upon it (12-19). It is integral to the gospel (1-11), eschatological hope (20-28), and Christian ethics (29-34). The bodily resurrection of Christian believers is consistent with natural principles of transformation and variation within kinds (35-49). Hence, we like Christ can be resurrected and not lose our identity. Since salvation, motivation, and anticipation of the believer are based upon it; the resurrection is one of few doctrines which cannot be overemphasized.
2. The resurrection should have a significant priority in every ministry. It is the foundation of steadfastness and fruitfulness in the work of the Lord, because the laborer can have assurance of future consequences of present commitment.

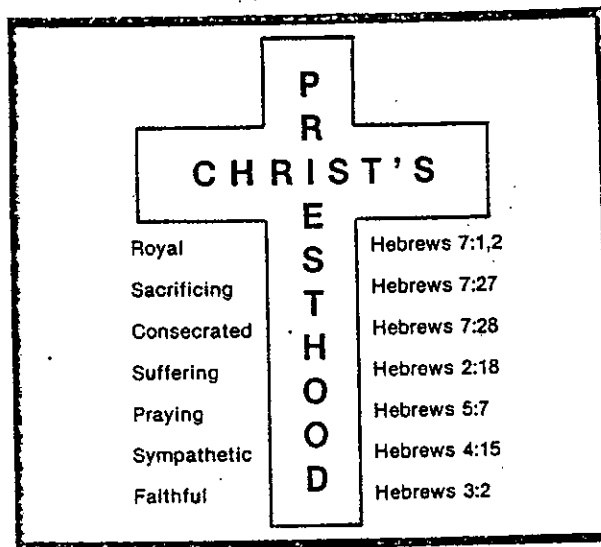
### THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

(A Summation)

The Hope of the Gospel thus is Eschatological in nature (Lk. 24:45-48; Acts 2:27, 35; 1 Cor. 15)  
It is the Core of the Christian Message

#### Theological Significance

- A. It tells us that the God who raised Jesus from the dead exists.
- B. It establishes Jesus' Lordship & Deity.
- C. It establishes the Doctrine of Justification which was accomplished on the Cross.
- D. The Resurrection promises that believers can live a life pleasing to God. (We are united to Him and His life becomes our life)
- E. The Resurrection promises victory over death (Jn. 14:1-9; 1 Cor. 15:55-57).
- F. The Resurrection is a pledge of God's final judgment (Acts 17:31, Heb. (9:26-27).



ASSU **R**ANCE  
 JUST **I**FICATION  
 TRAN **S**FORMATION  
 INH **E**RITANCE  
 FOUN **D**ATION

What the Resurrection Gives Us

It Establishes The PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

- A. It is important to remember that it is the Resurrected Christ, not the Christ on the Cross, who speaks peace to His disciples.
- B. The ministry was foretold by Him (Jn. 6:62, 20:17).
- C. John 17 exemplifies what takes place during Jesus' Priesthood: He pleads us guilty but pays our penalty.
- D. 1 Jn. 2:1 informs us that our defense with the Father is Christ (cf. also Rom. 8:32 ff).
- E. The Doctrine of the Priesthood is also taught by Paul (Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; 1 Tim. 3:16).
- F. Primarily in Hebrews is his priesthood expressed - 1:3, 6:20, 8:1, 9:12, 10:12, 12:1, 13:20).

(Also stated in the Apostles Creed)

IT IS THE BASIS FOR HIS ASCENSION AND EXALTATION - at the Father's Right Hand (Luke, 24, Acts 1)

It Includes -

1. His Exalted Ministry

- A. Position of Honor (Heb. 1:3) - it is important that He sat down at God's right hand. It speaks of the sharing of the King's rule & dominion. It shows the possession of Divine attributes to which He is now entitled, and also the finished aspect of His work.
- B. Divine Attributes (according to Dockery)

- 1. When He became man, He voluntarily gave up the free use of His divine attributes for a time
- 2. He will always be a man.
- 3. He is omnipotent.
- 4. He is omniscient.
- 5. He is omnipresent.

(Phil. 2:9-11: Now at God's right hand)

- C. Authority (Eph. 1:20-21) He is Head of the church. He has the position of authority by being at the right hand. Mt. 28:18 - All authority is given to Him.
- D. Position as Judge - Acts 7:56 Stephen's death - 2 unique things
  - 1. Someone else calls Him "Son of Man"
  - 2. He is standing at the Father's right Hand
  - 3. John's gospel/1 Cor. 15 (John 3:17, 5:22-24)

**Because  
He  
Lives...**

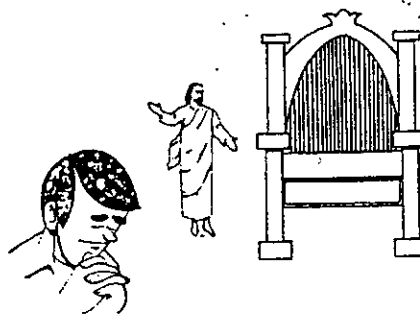
**We have:**

- \* **guaranteed eternal life**  
(John 11:25,26; 13:19)
- \* **justification** (Romans 4:25)
- \* **a compelling mission** (Acts 1:8)
- \* **a comforting hope**  
(I Thessalonians 4:13,14)
- \* **future glorification** (Romans 8:11;  
Philippians 3:20,21)
- \* **the Savior's abiding presence**  
(Matthew 28:19,20)
- \* **unlimited power** (Ephesians 1:15-21)

## 2. His Ascended Ministry

- A. He is preparing a place for us (Jn. 14:1-8)
- B. He sends the Spirit (Jn. 14-16 and Acts 1)
- C. This is where His intercessory role of High Priest takes place. (See Hebrews)
  1. Prophet - teaching on earth
  2. Priest - Cross work & intercession
  3. King - Position of exaltation, rule, dominion

## **CHRIST OUR MEDIATOR**



# RUDOLF BULTMANN ON JESUS AND HIS BODILY RESURRECTION

"I do indeed think we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist." - Jesus and the Word, p. 8

"But what of the resurrection? Is it not a mythical event pure and simple? Obviously it is not an event of past history with a self-evident meaning." - Kerygma and Myth, p. 38.

"The resurrection of Jesus cannot be a miraculous proof by which the sceptic might be compelled to believe in Christ." - Kerygma and Myth, p. 39.

"Both the legend of the empty tomb and the appearances insist on the physical reality of the risen body of the Lord. But these are most certainly later embellishments of the primitive tradition." - Kerygma and Myth, p. 39.

"An historical fact which involves a resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceivable!" - Kerygma and Myth, p. 39.

"The difficulty is not simply the incredibility of a mythical event like the resuscitation of a dead person.....nor is it merely the impossibility of establishing the objective historicity of the resurrection no matter how many witnesses are cited, as though once it was established it might be believed beyond all question and faith might have its unimpeachable guarantee." - Kerygma and Myth, pp. 39-40.

"And if faith in salvation by Jesus is only made complete by faith in the resurrection, does that not also demand a previous faith? For the resurrection, of course, simply cannot be a visible fact in the realm of human history." - Theology of the New Testament, vol. I, p. 295.

"Nothing preceding the faith which acknowledges the risen Christ can give insight into the reality of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection cannot - in spite of I Corinthians 15:3-8 - be demonstrated or made plausible as an objectively ascertainable fact on the basis of which one could believe. But insofar as it or the risen Christ is present in the proclaiming word, it can be believed - and only so it can be believed." - Theology of the New Testament, vol. I, p. 305.

## The Reality of the Resurrection

### 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

#### I. The resurrection of Jesus is a powerful reality 15:1-2

- 1) It provides us a standing 15:1
- 2) It provides us salvation 15:2

#### II. The resurrection of Jesus is a prophetic reality 15:3-4

- 1) Messiah died according to O.T. revelation 15:3
- 2) Messiah was raised according to O.T. revelation 15:4  
(cf. Gen. 22: Ps. 16:8-11; Ps. 22; Is. 52:13-53:12; Jonah 1:17; 2:10; Zech. 12:10)

#### III. The resurrection of Jesus is a proven reality 15:5-10

- 1) He was seen by Peter 15:5
- 2) He was seen by the apostles 15:5, 7
- 3) He was seen by over 500 15:6
- 4) He was seen by James 15:7
- 5) He was seen by Paul 15:8-10
  - a) This gospel inspires humility 15:8-9
  - b) This gospel energizes ability 15:10

#### IV. The resurrection of Jesus is a proclamation reality 15:11

- 1) This gospel must be preached
- 2) This gospel must be believed

"The mystery of the Incarnation unfolds into the mystery of Good Friday and of Easter. And once more it is as it has been said so often in this whole mystery of faith, that we must always see two things together, we must always understand one by the other...for there is no *theologia crucis* which does not have its complement in the *theologia gloriae*. Of course, there is no Easter without Good Friday, but equally certainly there is no Good Friday without Easter."

--Karl Barth Dogmatics in Outline. (New York: Harper's and Row, 1959)

"The resurrection of Jesus was a real historical occurrence, and not something first and foremost taking place in the hearts and minds of the first believers. The crucifixion of Jesus by itself could not have motivated the courage of martyrdom and unquenchable hope for the cause of salvation which Jesus preached and embodied in his actions."

--Jewish Scholar, Lapide Pinchas The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983) p. 16.

## What If The Resurrection Is Not Real?

### 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

If the doctrine of bodily resurrection is false then:

- I. Christ is not risen 15:12-13, 16
- II. Preaching is vain 15:14
- III. Faith in Christ is futile 15:14, 17
- IV. We are false witnesses 15:15
- V. We are still in our sins 15:17
- VI. Dead believers have perished 15:18
- VII. We of all men are the most pitiable 15:19



"Wait! Wait! He doesn't stay dead!"

## "Security for Tomorrow"

### 1 Corinthians 15:20-34

Because Christ was raised from the dead:

#### I. Death has been destroyed (past) 15:20-23

- 1) Christ is the promise 15:20
- 2) Christ has the power 15:21-22
- 3) Christ has the priority 15:23

#### II. The kingdom will be delivered (future) 15:24-28

- 1) Christ will reign over the kingdom of the Father 15:24-26
- 2) Christ will relinquish the kingdom to the Father 15:27-28

#### III. Believers can be diligent (present) 15:29-34

- 1) We can live securely 15:29-30
- 2) We can live sacrificially 15:31-32
- 3) We can live sensibly 15:33
- 4) We can live sinlessly 15:34
- 5) We can live shamelessly 15:34



## "THE BODY I ALWAYS WANTED"

1 Corinthians 15:35-49

- I. It is sown in death but it is raised in life 15:35-36
- II. It is sown unimpressive but it is raised marvelous 15:37-38
- III. It is sown in similarity but it is raised in diversity 15:39-41
- IV. It is sown in corruption but it is raised in incorruption 15:42
- V. It is sown in dishonor but it is raised in glory 15:43
- VI. It is sown in weakness but it is raised in power 15:43
- VII. It is sown a natural body but it is raised a spiritual body 15:44
- VIII. It is sown an earthly body but it is raised a heavenly body 15:45-49

### "The Victory of the King"

Jesus said Yes to the death of the cross,  
 Cried it is finished and slumped to die.  
 In the legions of darkness the devil celebrated,  
 "We've destroyed the King!" he cried.  
 But amidst the celebration footsteps were heard  
 walking the corridors of Hell.  
 Then the shouting stopped when a voice rang out,  
 A voice that rang like a bell.  
 Satan then trembled as he recognized Him  
 Who came to deliver His own.  
 "Shut and lock the gates!" he cried.  
 "Don't let Him ascend to His throne!"  
 Then the gates swung shut in the face of the King,  
 To prove God's salvation untrue.  
 But He shook Hell's gates and cried,  
 "Lift up your heads, the King is coming through!"  
 Then out of the devil's prison house  
 Came a procession led by the King,  
 Shouting, "Now O grave, where is thy victory; O death where is thy sting!"

Author Unknown



## Doctrines Which We Hold in Common with Many Other Evangelical Christians

And, in common with a large body of evangelical Christians nearly all Baptists believe what are usually termed the "doctrines of grace."

1. The absolute sovereignty and foreknowledge of God.
2. His eternal and unchangeable purposes or decrees.
3. That salvation in its beginning, continuance and completion, is God's free gift.
4. That in Christ, we are elected or chosen, personally or individually, from eternity, saved and called out from the world, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.
5. That we are kept by his power from falling away, and will be presented faultless before the presence of his glory. Read Romans 8, 9, 10, 11; Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:4,5; Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 Peter 1:2-5; Jude 24; Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5.

## Properly Presenting the Gospel

We have all heard the gospel presented as God's triumphant answer to human problems—problems of man's relation with himself and his fellows and his environment. Well, there is no doubt that the gospel does bring us solutions to these problems, but it does so by first solving a deeper problem—the deepest of all human problems, the problem of man's relation with his Maker; and unless we make it plain that the solution of these former problems depends on the settling of this latter one, we are misrepresenting the message and becoming false witnesses of God—for a half truth presented as if it were the whole truth becomes something of a falsehood by that very fact.

J. I. Packer

## The Subtle Lure of Liberalism

Timothy George

[This article first appeared in the April 1992 issue of TableTalk and is reprinted here by permission.]

It has been a long time since I met an authentic, bold-faced liberal, one willing to claim that one word as a badge of identity. Many evangelical Christians believe, of course, that such creatures did, in fact, once exist. In the far-distant past, these theological dinosaurs roamed the ecclesiastical landscape, devouring young seminarians, disrupting the life of the church, defrauding simple believers of the faith of their fathers. Now, it is argued, we live in a different age. The climate of civility and the proclivity for pluralism have rendered liberalism obsolete. To be sure, dinosaur bones are still interesting to examine on a rainy Saturday afternoon in the museum. But no one gets carried away by such relics from the past. Not any more.

It was very different in 1923 when J. Gresham Machen first published *Christianity and Liberalism*, a book which Walter Lippmann, no friend of conservatives, referred to as a "cool and stringent defense of orthodox Protestantism." Back then the lines were clearly drawn. Machen presented "the great redemptive religion which has always been known as Christianity" over against a "totally diverse type of religious belief," a nonredemptive religion of recent vintage known variously as modernism or liberalism. While recognizing great diversity within modern liberal religion, Machen traced its root cause to its antisupeaturalist bias: a view of revelation and Christian faith which excluded the creative power of the very God whose love it claimed to extol.

For many years it appeared that the liberalism against which Machen fought had won the day. The Scopes Trial, fissiparous fundamentalism, and snake-handling revivalism relegated conservative Christianity to the backwaters of American church life. Now, with the precipitous decline of the mainline Protestant establishment, liberals are harder to find. Those who advocate a broader, more accommodated form of Christianity are likely to designate their position as progressive, advanced, tolerant, enlightened, or what has been called the all-time favorite among weasel words—moderate.

Where have all the liberals gone? Could it be that what once appeared as a blatant form of compromised Christianity now poses as a more refined, sleeker version of the real thing? During the Middle Ages there was a popular story which circulated about Martin of Tours, the saint for whom Martin Luther was named. It was said that

Satan once appeared to St. Martin in the guise of the Savior himself. St. Martin was ready to fall to his feet and worship this resplendent being of glory and light. Then, suddenly, he looked up into the palms of his hands and asked, "Where are the nail prints?" Whereupon the apparition vanished.

Where are the nail prints? This is the test by which every theological system, every seminary curriculum, and every ministry which claims to be faithful to the Gospel (the root meaning of *evangelical*) must be gauged. Never before in the history of the church has the necessity of discerning the times and testing the spirits fallen with greater urgency on the people of God.

Today subtle forms of unbelief masquerade as seemingly virtues or keys to a successful ministry or secular justifications of otherwise embarrassing truth-claims. Satan is less concerned with those ministers who openly deny the deity of Christ, the truthfulness of Holy Scripture, and the supernatural reality of the Gospel. Their apostasy is secure. His chief aim is to corrupt the rising generation of evangelical church leaders by subverting their biblical values and theological conviction until, by osmosis, they have forfeited their birthright and know not that it is gone. Every young minister will face this temptation on at least three fronts.

### *The Ideology of Indifference*

In recent years a new mythology of Christian identity has emerged which runs something like this: "Christians are not essentially a doctrinal people. The Bible means whatever you want it to mean. The basic criterion of theology is individual experience. The right of private judgment in religious matters overrules fixed norms of doctrine." The upshot of such radical subjectivism is seen in the way candidates for the ministry are casually admitted to the ordained ministry: A sweet smile and a pious declaration of "Jesus in my heart" will often satisfy the well-wishing examination committee. More and more this stance is also reflected in the way theological educators interpret their primary mission as essentially therapeutic: to help troubled seekers come to grips with their own sense of self rather than to train a cadre of Christian heralds to preach, evangelize, shepherd, lead, and serve.

Many evangelicals, seduced by the cult of pragmatism, have bought the liberal line that the way to peace and success in the church is to define the smallest number of doctrines possible, and to hold them as lightly as one can. When, in the sixteenth century, Erasmus proposed something similar, Luther replied that there could be no Christianity without assertions. By assertions he meant "a con-

stant adhering, affirming, confessing, maintaining, an invincible persevering . . . in those things which have been divinely transmitted to us in the sacred writings."

What passes as theology in many seminaries and divinity schools today is noticeably devoid of assertions. "Thus saith the Lord" has been replaced by "It seems to me." The decline of doctrinal teaching in the seminary bears fruit in the absence of doctrinal preaching in the pulpit. When is the last time you've heard a sermon on the Trinity, the second coming of Christ, on heaven and hell? What the old liberalism accomplished by frontal assault, the ideology of indifference now achieves by benign neglect—not out of a sense of proper humility for the deep things of God, but rather from a failure of nerve.

I once had a teacher who said he would rather his students be passionately wrong than disinterestedly right. Without pushing that idea too far, it is clear that Christianity makes claims about God, the human condition, and the life to come which cannot be studied with detached neutrality. Doctrine matters. Luther was right to get upset with Zwingli over the Lord's Supper at the Colloquy of Marburg (1529), even though, as I believe, he was defending a defective view of the Eucharist. A Luther who would have said at Marburg, "Oh, our differences are not important. Let's shake hands, be friends, and forget the whole thing," would never have had the courage to say at Worms, "Here I stand. God help me. Amen."

Only when we take seriously the content of Christian belief can we distinguish properly those evangelical essentials which orthodox believers of various traditions affirm from those second-order theological concerns about which we disagree. The early fundamentalist coalition was led by an interdenominational, international team of church leaders who faced a common enemy in modern unbelieving theology. They differed widely on many matters: church governance, the sacraments, the nature of sanctification, and the details of eschatology. But they stood shoulder to shoulder in proclaiming the Gospel of the triune God who reveals Himself in a truth-telling Bible, the God who redeems lost human beings through the substitutionary atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ. Now, as then, the renewal of theology must issue in a holistic, ecumenical orthodoxy which, quickened by the Holy Spirit, will build up the church amidst the anxieties of the times.

### *The User-Friendly God*

Since Friedrich Schleiermacher and the "turn to the subject" in theology, the primary datum of theological liberalism has been the religious self-consciousness of human beings. The fatal temptation of

the liberal experiment has always been to turn theology into anthropology, to reduce propositions about God to statements about man. Today this tendency is rampant in the faddish theologies which thrive among the educational and bureaucratic elites within many of the old-line Protestant denominations ranging from liberation theologies of various political hues to Jungian analysis and the cult of self-esteem.

Even more disturbing is the loss of a transcendent referent in the way many evangelical Christians do church. Pastors have become skilled salesmen hawking a product to a self-seeking public. The Gospel is "dumbed down" to its lowest common denominator, repentance is no longer a priority, and the work of the Holy Spirit is reduced to a pious platitude. Where indeed are the nail prints?

The sizing-down of God greatly effects the way we study the Bible. Liberal exegesis and evangelical hedonism share a common approach to the Scriptures: both want to make the Bible "relevant" to modern men and women. Yet the Bible is not in the first instance a record of human thoughts about God; it is rather the revelation of God's judgment on fallen humanity. The role of the exegete and preacher is not to make the Bible relevant to the modern world. It is to show how *irrelevant* the modern world and we ourselves have become in our rebellion against God.

Karl Barth, who himself conceded too much to the liberal theology he was seeking to overcome, was nonetheless on target when he wrote: "The Bible does not tell us how we should speak about God but what God says to us; not how we may find the way to Him but how He sought and found the way to us; not what is the proper relation in which we must stand to Him but what is the covenant He has made with all who in faith are the children of Abraham, and that He has sealed once and for all in Jesus Christ."

### *Jesus and Buddha, Too*

Liberal Christianity arose in the nineteenth century in response to the intellectual challenge of the Enlightenment. That problem may prove minor, however, when compared to the challenge of religious pluralism in the twenty-first century. The liberal view of world religions has led to a watering down of traditional Christian affirmations about the uniquely divine nature of Jesus Christ and the necessity of conversion. For example, a former Muslim reported that when he walked into a Protestant mission station in Gambia and declared that he wished to become a Christian, the pastor tried to talk him out of it!

Evangelicals are not exempt from the temptation to equate sincerity with salvation nor the implicit universalism which claims that Christ came not so much to redeem lost persons from sin and eternal damnation as to enhance the religious dimension that is

innate in the human soul. At a recent missions conference attended by thousands of evangelical students, only one third of the participants indicated their belief that "a person who does not hear the Gospel is eternally lost." Had William Carey, who launched the modern missionary movement two hundred years ago, accepted the premise of much contemporary missiological thinking, he would never have gone to India in the first place; or, had he done so, he would have embraced there the indigenous Hindu belief that all religions are equally valid paths to the one unknowable god.

The sovereignty of God, the authority of Holy Scripture, and the finality of Jesus Christ are the bedrock convictions from which no true minister of the Gospel can afford to slide. Machen's words written more than three quarters of a century ago are still valid today: "If the Word of God be heeded, the Christian battle will be fought both with love and with faithfulness. Party passions and personal animosities will be put away, but on the other hand, even angels from heaven will be rejected if they preach a Gospel different from the blessed Gospel of the Cross. Every man must decide upon which side he will stand. God grant that we may decide aright!"

## The Old Gospel

Never lose heart in the power of the gospel. Do not believe that there exists any man, much less any race of men, for whom the gospel is not fitted.

If God does not save men by the truth, he certainly does not save them by lies. And if the old gospel is not competent to work a revival, then we will do without the revival.

Charles Spurgeon

# NEW AGE DOCTRINES PC(USA) PROMOTES GODDESS WORSHIP

By Paul English

National staff and leaders of the Presbyterian Church (USA) gathered with feminist leaders from other World Council of Churches denominations to destroy patriarchal religion and worship the goddess "Sophia," according to an article in the January/February issue of the *Presbyterian Layman*.

Repeated themes in the November 4-7 conference, "Re-Imagining 1993," included destroying traditional Christian faith, adopting ancient pagan beliefs, rejecting Jesus' divinity and His atonement on the cross, creating a goddess in their own image, and affirming lesbian love-making.

According to the *Layman*, 24 PC(USA) national staff members registered for the event. The denomination's Bicentennial Fund was the largest source of financial support for the conference with a \$66,000 grant.

Johanna Bos, feminist professor at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, was greeted with cheers and applause when she stated, "We have not come here to jump on the feminist band wagon, but to upset the patriarchal apple cart."

Part of the upset included religious

**"I don't think we need a theory of atonement at all. I don't think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff."**

ideas from the East. Conferences speakers taught "panic healing" and leaders led the group in singing repeatedly throughout the 4-day event, "Oh great spirit, earth and wind and sea, you are inside and all around me."

Lesbian feminist Virginia Mollenkott picked up on that theme. "The monism I'm talking about assumes that god is so all-inclusive that she is involved in every cell of those who are thoughts in her mind and embodiments of her image," she said.

Conference participants worshipped the divine in each other by marking red dots on their foreheads to signify their divinity, and then bowing to each other in an act of reverence. They sang songs to the goddess Sophia, the

source of their divinity, the creator god who dwells within them and unleashes within them their divine power.

Traditional Christian teaching on the Atonement was completely overturned.

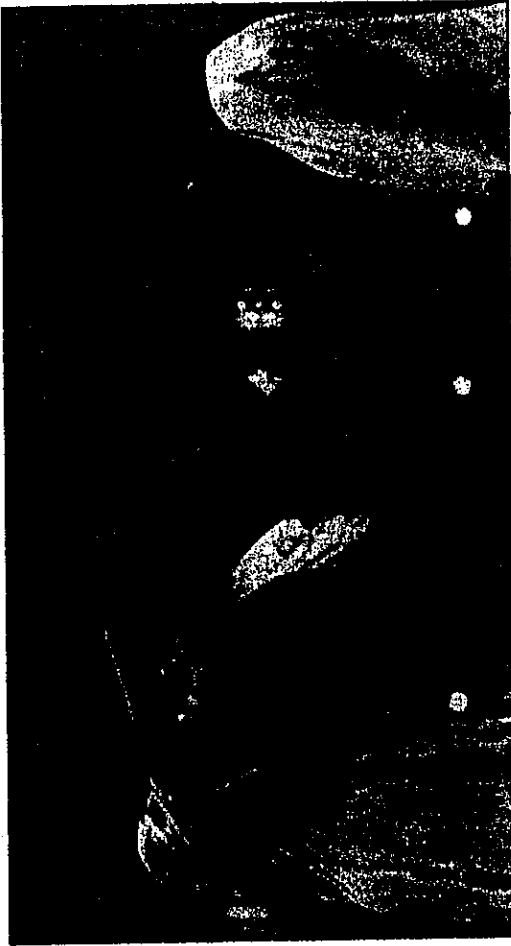
Deborah Williams, professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, told the group, "I don't think we need a theory of atonement at all. I think Jesus came for life and to show us something about life ... I don't think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff."

Mollenkott claimed that Jesus' death was the ultimate in child abuse and a model for human child abuse. "I can no longer worship in a theological context that depicts God as an abusive parent and Jesus as the obedient, trusting child," she declared.

Arunda Gnanadason, director of the sub-unit on Women in the Church and Society of the World Council of Churches, condemned the church as a patriarchal institution that "centered its faith around the cruel and violent death of Christ on the cross, sanctioning violence against the powerless in society."

Lesbian sexuality was celebrated as normal and good, while Biblical ideas of sexuality were thrown out.

Lesbian Roman Catholic feminist



A speaker receives a blessing from the goddess Sophia at "Re-Imagining 1993," a pseudo-Christian conference promoting goddess worship and lesbianism, funded by the PC(USA).

Mary Hunt, co-founder of the radical group WATER (Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual) proposed "friendship as a metaphor for family."

She explained her new metaphor, saying, "Imagine sex among friends as the norm, young people learning how to make friends rather than to date. Imagine valuing genital sexual interaction in terms of whether and how it fosters friendship and pleasure.... Pleasure is our birthright of which we have been robbed in religious patriarchy. It is time to claim it anew with our friends... Responsible relational sexuality is a human right. I picture friends, not families, basking in the pleasures we deserve because our bodies are holy and our sexuality is part of creation's available riches."

Melanie Morrison, co-convenor of CLOUT (Christian Lesbians Out Together), told the group that liturgists in

her church read from the holy book of Isaiah and then from "a holy book" written by a lesbian author.

Earlier in the plenary session Morrison led a demonstration in which she invited all the lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual women to come forward, and all others to stand in solidarity. She then led the group in a song affirming their determination to celebrate lesbian sexual relationships.

The conference finished with a "milk and honey" ritual instead of the Lord's Supper. The women recited the litany, "Our maker Sophia, we are women in your image, with the hot blood of our wombs we give form to new life ... with nectar between our thighs we invite a lover ... with our warm body fluids we remind the world of its pleasures and sensations ... with the honey of wisdom in our mouths we prophesy a full humanity to all the peoples." \*

"as long as our culture images God as a father demanding and carrying out the suffering and death of his own son, it is sanctioning abuse and it is abandoning the victims of abuse and oppression. Not until this image is shattered will it be possible to create a just society."

Joanne Carlson Brown, "Divine Child Abuse?" *Daughters of Sarah*. Volume 18, No. 3. (Summer 1992), page 26.

## Views of the Atonement

	Ransom to Satan Theory	Recapitulation Theory	Dramatic Theory	Mystical Theory	Example Theory
Definition	Christ's death was a ransom paid to Satan to purchase captive man from Satan's claims.	Christ in his life recapitulated all the stages of human life, in so doing reversed the course initiated by Adam.	Christ is Victor in a divine conflict of good and evil and wins man's release from bondage.	Christ took on a human, sinful nature but through the power of the Holy Spirit triumphed over it. A knowledge of this will mystically influence man.	Christ's death provided an example of faith and obedience to inspire man to be obedient.
Proponents	Origen	Irenaeus	Aulen	Schleiermacher	Pelagius, Socinus, Abelard
Scriptural Support	Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; I Corinthians 6:20	Romans 5:15-21; Hebrews 2:10	Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; I Corinthians 15:51-57	Hebrews 2:10, 14-18; 4:14-16	I Peter 2:21; I John 2:6
Object	Satan	Satan	Satan	Man	Man
Man's Spiritual Condition	Bondage to Satan	Bondage to Satan	Bondage to Satan	Lack of God-consciousness	Spiritually alive (Pelagian)
Meaning of Christ's Death	God's victory over Satan	Christ's recapitulation of all of the stages of human life	God's victory over Satan	Christ's triumph over his own sinful nature	An example of true faith and obedience
Value to Man	Freedom from enslavement to Satan	Reversing the course of mankind from disobedience to obedience	God's reconciliation of the world out of its bondage to evil	A mystical subconscious influence	Inspiration to a faithful and obedient life

## Views of the Atonement (continued)

	Moral Influence Theory	Commercial Theory	Governmental Theory	Penal Substitution Theory
Definition	Christ's death demonstrated God's love, which causes man's heart to soften and repent.	Christ's death brought infinite honor to God. So God gave Christ a reward which he did not need, and Christ passed it on to man.	Christ's death demonstrates God's high regard for his law. It shows God's attitude toward sin. Through Christ's death God has a rationale to forgive the sins of those who repent and accept Christ's substitutionary death.	Christ's death was a vicarious (substitutionary) sacrifice that satisfied the demands of God's justice upon sin, paying the penalty of man's sin, bringing forgiveness, imputing righteousness, and reconciling man to God.
Proponents	Abelard, Bushnell, Rashdall	Anselm	Grotius	Calvin
Scriptural Support	Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 3:24	John 10:18	Psalms 2, 5; Isaiah 42:21	John 11:50-52; Romans 5:8-9; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 3:18,
Object	Man	God/Man	God/Man	God
Man's Spiritual Condition	Man is sick and needs help.	Man is dishonoring to God.	Man is a violator of God's moral law.	Man is totally depraved.
Meaning of Christ's Death	Demonstrated God's love toward man.	Brought infinite honor to God.	A substitute for the penalty of sin and showed God's attitude toward sin.	Christ bore the penalty of sin instead of man.
Value to Man	Man is moved to accept God's forgiveness by seeing God's love for man.	This honor, not needed by Christ, is applied to sinners for salvation.	Makes legal God's desire to forgive those who accept Christ as their substitute.	Through his repentance, man can accept Christ's substitution as payment for sin.

# Protests Halt Censorship at Los Angeles Times

The Los Angeles Times, after refusing to run a Christian-themed B.C. comic strip on March 31, bowed to public pressure and halted their plans to censor two other strips in an Easter trilogy in April.

Johnny Hart, creator of the B.C. comic strip and a self-described "re-awakened Christian," says officials at the Los Angeles Times, "exposed their anti-Christian bias" by refusing to run the initial strip that referred to Christ's resurrection.

"Comics should be free of censorship," said the 65-year-old veteran cartoonist.

"They are just digging themselves in deeper with anti-Christian bias ... and they are just exposing themselves for what they are."

B.C. runs in about 1,200 newspapers nationwide.

But the Times was the only paper that chose to censor Hart's Easter strip on the 31st.

Then, on Tuesday, April 2, Ariel Remler, a Times spokeswoman, said the paper would be "omitting the (B.C.) comics from Friday, Saturday and Sunday's papers" due to what the paper deemed to be an overly-Christian message.

In the strip, a character named Wiley writes a poem acclaiming the resurrection of "The Suffering Prince."

The public was outraged. Hundreds of calls flooded the

Times office as area Christians voiced their indignity.

In addition, the Times weakened their cause by choosing to print a political cartoon that was considered offensive to Christians -- at the very time it had purged the B.C. strip from its pages.

That cartoon depicted GOP presidential hopeful Bob Dole crucified on a cross with a crown of thorns and a sign reading "Christian Coalition" on his head.

(The cartoon made reference to Mr. Dole's trouble recruiting religious conservatives to support his campaign.) The Times responded to the cartoon: "Paul Conrad's (the cartoon's creator) drawing is the sort of provocative work that has distinguished him in public affairs controversies over the years."

Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition rebutted: "The combination of Conrad's depiction of Dole as a crucified Christ figure and politically active people of faith as his murderers combined with the censorship of (the B.C. cartoon) to us shows a disturbing pattern of censorship of positive religious themes and insensitivity toward people of faith."

The wrong-headed decision to run the cartoon, combined with the bad timing of the decision and the resulting public ire, caused the Times

leadership to mysteriously alter their plans to ignore the three B.C. strips.

They announced on April 6 that they would, in fact, run the B.C. resurrection strips -- including the one they had previously omitted on March 31.

But there was one catch. Instead of running the strip in its usual place among the other comics, the Times decided to run them in the paper's religion section.

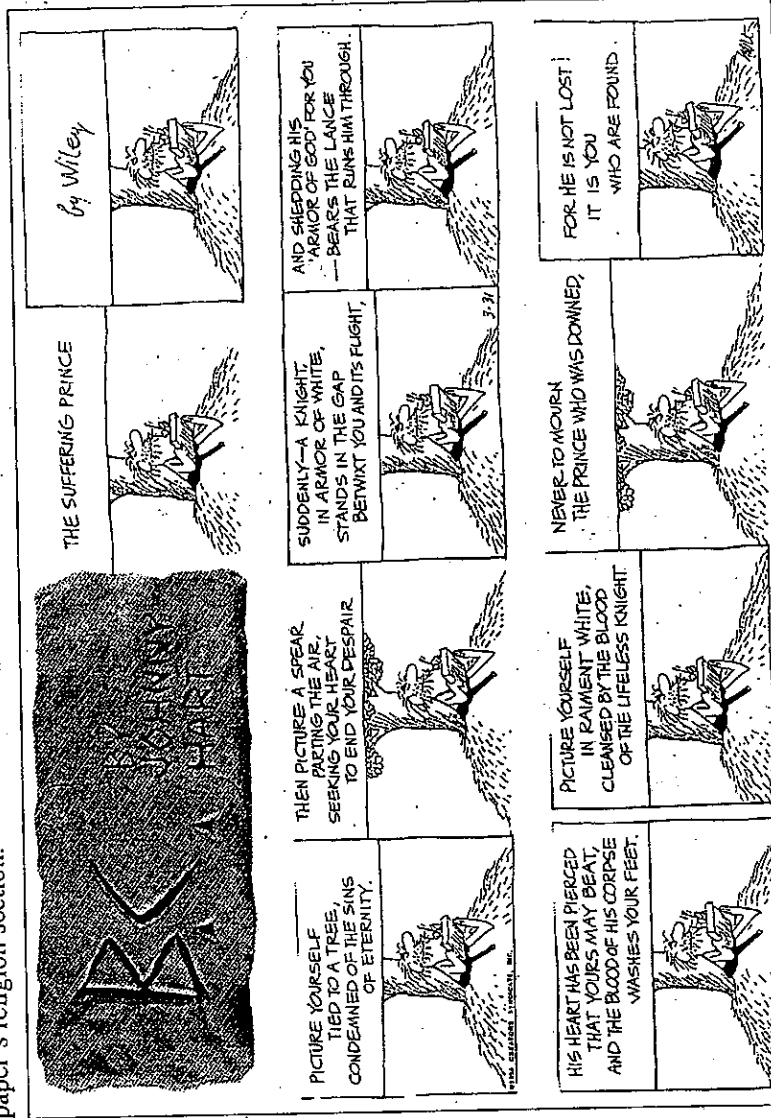
Asked why the Times chose to oust, then segregate, the comic strip, Remler responded, "Basically, the Times' position is that it rotates or omits comics on the basis of what we think is right for our audience. We have such a large, diverse audience."

Narda Zachino, the Times' associate editor, added, "This (was) not censorship. This is editing."

"The Conrad cartoon

appeared on the op-ed page, where one expects to find political satire or thought-provoking articles and cartoons. There is a major distinction between the comics pages and the editorial and op-ed pages and what the reader expects to see there."

In other words, a reader should never expect to be exposed to a religious-themed cartoon in the paper. That's diversity according to the Los Angeles Times.



**CHRISTIAN CARTOON = BAD CARTOON:** The Los Angeles Times decided this B.C. comic was too overtly religious to print in the publication. Editors later deemed it appropriate to print but shifted its location to the paper's religion section.

## THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT

### I. The Various Theories of The Atonement

#### A. The Ransom To (or Victory Over) Satan Theory (dramatic historical view)

1. Its Proponents - Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Aulen
2. Its Description
  - A. Early church view (dominated for the first 1000 years).
  - B. A ransom was paid to Satan who demanded Christ's blood.  
(Ransom determined by, paid to, and accepted by Satan).
  - C. Satan was deceived by the death of Christ and defeated.  
(Ex. fishhook/mousetrap)
  - D. Satan defeated through "holy deception" (deity hidden cannot die).
  - E. Man delivered.

#### B. The Recapitulation Theory

1. Its Proponents - Irenaeus
2. Its Description - Christ recapitulates in Himself all stages of human life, including our state as sinners.  
Reversed the course Adam set us on.

#### C. The Satisfaction Theory (commercial theory)

1. Its Proponents - Anselm
2. Its Description - Compensation to the Father
  - A. Atonement is totally objective/transactional.
  - B. There is logical ontological necessity for incarnation/atonement.  
(man offended and must pay) (God is offended and an infinite satisfaction is required).
  - C. Atonement satisfies the offended majesty of God.  
(sin is failure to render God His due and thus dishonors Him).
  - D. Atonement satisfies nothing to Satan, for Satan is owed nothing.
  - E. Atonement thinking influenced by feudal culture/Roman penitence.



D. The Moral Influence Theory

1. Its Proponents - Peter Abelard, Horace Bushnell, Hastings Rashdall

2. Its Description

- A. Atonement a demonstration of God's love for us which inspires a reciprocal response of love by us.
- B. Divine nature does not require satisfaction - love is the essential attribute of God not holiness.
- C. Satan does not deserve a ransom.
- D. Popular among liberal theologians.

E. The Example Theory

1. Its Proponents - Faustus and Laelius Socinus  
(modern Unitarians)

2. Its Description

- A. Emphasized Jesus' love for God as an example we are to follow I Peter 2:21.
- B. Jesus provides a supreme example of faith, obedience, and dedication to God and inspires us to follow.
- C. Pelagian view of sin.
- D. God does not require satisfaction (sin is not that serious).
- E. Christ is viewed as only human.
- F. No true atonement.
- G. Unscriptural.

F. The Governmental Theory

1. Its Proponents - Hugo Grotius (lawyer)

2. Its Description - Atonement a demonstration of Divine Justice which maintains order in the universe.

- A. Sin is serious.
- B. Opposed to the Socinians.
- C. Sin violates God's moral laws which God is concerned with.
- D. Sin attacks God as ruler of the universe.
- E. Christ's death is a substitution for penalty.
- F. Christ's death not substitutionary but a demonstration of God's hatred for sin.

G. The Mystical Theory (similar to moral influence)

1. Its Proponents - Schleiermacher, Edward Irving
2. Its Description - Atonement exercises a mystical/subjective transformation in man via the entrance of the divine life.

A. Negative aspects:

1. No clear means of appropriating Christ's work.
2. Denies the deity of Christ.
3. Denies the sinless nature.
4. Does not account for man's guilt.
5. Not scripturally supported.
6. Not sufficient for O.T. believers.

H. Vicarious Repentance (representative theory)

1. Its Proponents - V. Taylor
2. Its Description - Christ represents man in offering perfect repentance. Also called the theory of sympathy and identification, Christ's work consists of vicarious confession of sin on behalf of man.

I. The Penal Satisfaction or Penal Substitution Theory

1. Its Proponents - Calvin, Hodge, Berkof, Warfield, Morris, Stott
2. Its Description - Christ, by offering Himself as a sacrifice, by substituting Himself for us, and actually bearing the punishment which should have been ours, satisfied the Father and effected a reconciliation between God and man.

- A. Atonement is Objective.
- B. Atonement is vicarious (substitutionary).
- C. Atonement is sufficient payment/satisfaction.

### 3. Its Substantiation

- A. The lexical argument is based on the words rendered "to propitiate" or "propitiation" in four crucial passages describing the death of Christ. These words are in the hilaskomai (hilasmos - meaning mercy seat, covering) word group, and related to the Heb. kipper.

#### 1. Romans 3:25

whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

#### 2. Hebrews 2:17

Therefore, he had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

## The Sinner's Substitute

Barabbas: "father's son"	Jesus: "Saviour"
fallen son of Adam	faithful Son of God
malefactor	"went about doing good" (Acts 10:38)
deserved to be punished	innocent
allowed to go free	nailed to the cross prepared for Barabbas

Jesus was not only the substitute for Barabbas, He endured the cross as our substitute too.



3. 1 John 2:2 - and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.
4. 1 John 4:10 - 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.

B. The theological argument is based on both explicit biblical teaching and biblical narrative.

A. The explicit biblical material includes, for example:

1. Teaching from every body of New Testament literature

a) Matthew/Mark: Matt. 20:28/Mark 10:45

Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

b) Peter: 1 Peter 2:24

and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

c) Luke/Acts:

...Jesus is identified as the Servant of the Lord ( cf Is. 53) Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30; 8:26ff.

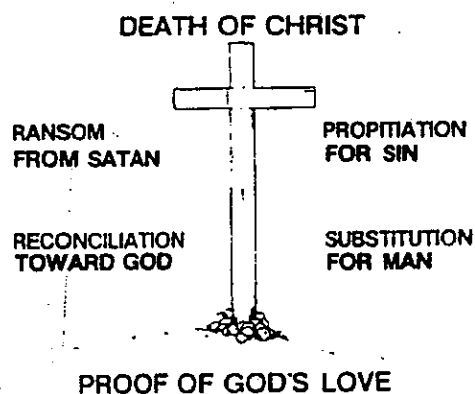
...Jesus is identified as the Redeemer whose purchase of the church is made with his blood

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:28

...Jesus is identified as the curse-bearer by allusions to Deut. 21:22f in Acts 5:30, 10:39; 13:29

...Jesus is identified as the last Adam in Lk. 3; 4; 23:39-43

d) John/his epistles/Revelation:



Jesus is the lamb of sacrifice

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said,  
"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of  
the world!" Jn. 1:29

Jesus' death is a propitiation 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10

- e) Paul's epistles: Rom. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13

2 Cor. 5:21 - He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Gal. 3:13 - Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-for it is written, "Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree"-

- f) Hebrews: Heb. 2:17, 7:26-27

Hebrews 7:26-27

26- For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

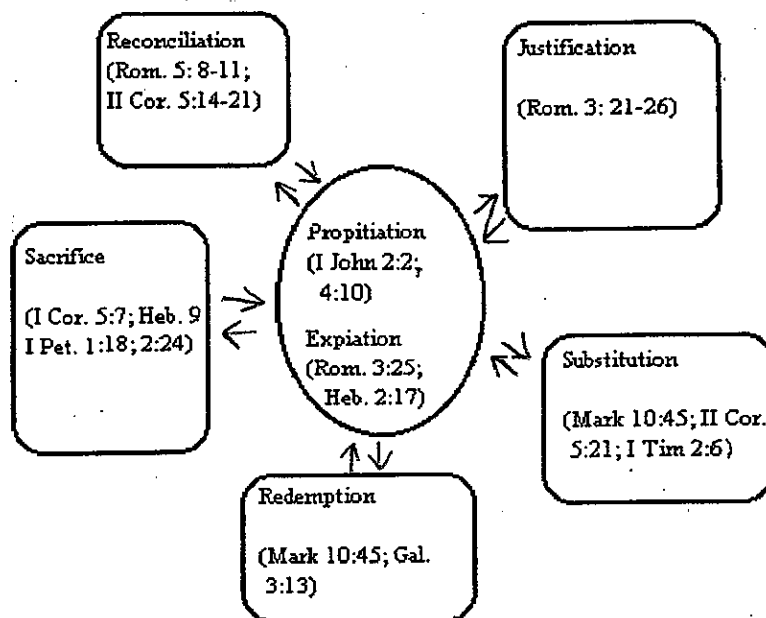
27- who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

- 2) We may deduce from the major descriptions of the nature of the atonement or its effects the Penal Satisfaction/Substitution doctrine.

- a) Sacrifice. Propitiation is the essence of the purpose of sacrifice in the O.T. (See L. Morris, The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross.)
- b) Substitution- if on other grounds you establish substitution then you must ask yourself: in what respect was Christ a substitute? What does he bear that is ours except our sin?

And what does sin merit except the wrath of God? Therefore, he satisfies or propitiates the wrath of God, the justice of God, with his own death instead of ours.

- c) Reconciliation- this assumes there is reason for enmity between God and man. Man is reconciled to God which according to Greek idiom can mean that God is conciliated (Morris p. 237). How could God be conciliated if the cause for enmity is sin, deserving wrath? The wrath must be vented and since reconciliation is through the cross (Rom. 5:10), we must assume that there the wrath of God was vented against Christ.
- d) Redemption- this assumes among other things a price for ransom which, according to Christ, is his own life in the place of the many (Mark 10:45). This is nothing more than substitution which necessitates propitiation, his bearing the curse for us in redeeming us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13).
- e) Justification . . . man is legally acquitted of his sin. But this can only be just if the penalty for sin is executed. We are told it was legally executed at the cross. But what is the penalty except the (legal) wrath of God against sin. Therefore, the execution of the penalty in justification once again necessitates the propitiation of God in the death of His Son.
- f) This may be visualized as follows:



God is not only perfectly holy, but the source and pattern of holiness: He is the origin and the upholder of the moral order of the Universe. He *must* be just. The judge of the earth *must* do right. Therefore it was impossible by the necessities of His own being that He should deal lightly with sin, and compromise the claims of holiness.

H. E. Guillebaud, Why the Cross? (London, England; Intervarsity Fellowship, 1961), 130.

It is very possible for our theory of the Atonement to be crude and incoherent, but it is hardly possible to have no theory at all . . . Some conception, however vague, of the relations between human sin and the Death of Christ, and between the Death of Christ and the Divine forgiveness, will take form and substance in the mind of every man who is in the habit of reading the New Testament, and who believes that the teaching of Christ and His Apostles reveals the thought of God.

R. W. Dale, The Atonement (London, England: Congregational Union of England and Wales Memorial Hall, 1899), 14.

"The atonement is the crucial doctrine of the faith . . . Unless we are right here it matters little, or so it seems to me, what we are like elsewhere."

Leon Morris, The Cross in the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 5.

"The Atonement is Christianity in epitome. It is the heart of Christianity as a system; it is the distinguishing mark of the Christian religion."

Dyson Hague, The Fundamentals (xi, Chicago, n.d.) 23 as cited in Morris.

"He who understands the Cross aright . . . understands the Bible, he understands Jesus Christ."

Emil Brunner, The Mediator (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1947), 435.

In the atonement God's righteousness is declared in that he has dealt justly with sin by imposing its full penalty on his Son. At the same time he has justified sinners who by faith have trusted in Jesus. No explanation insofar as I can tell adequately accounts for this remarkable avowal except penal substitution.

Paige Patterson, "Reflections on the Atonement," Criswell Theological Review 3 (Spring 1989): 320.

The ultimate penalty for man's transgression is death. When a worshipper placed his hands on the head of the sacrificial animal, he symbolically transferred his guilt and penalty to the animal. Sentenced thus to the death penalty, the animal was slain. By any reasonable assessment, this was penal substitution.

Patterson, 318.

Penal substitution is the major and indispensable model for comprehending what God was doing in Christ. . . This is not to say that a fully biblical perspective of the atonement would not include such ideas as "example," "reconciliation," "moral influence," and a number of others. However, the thesis is that the foundational understanding of the atonement in the Bible is that of penal substitution.

Substitution is not a "theory of atonement." It is rather the essence and the heart of the atonement itself.

Stott, The Cross of Christ, 202-3.

A further line of evidence is the prepositions used to designate the precise relationship between Christ's work and us. The preposition which most clearly suggests substitution is anti. The word in nonsoteriological contexts clearly means "instead of" or "in the place of" . . . When we look at passages where the preposition anti is used to specify the relationship between Christ's death and sinners, this same idea of substitution is clearly present.

Erickson, Christian Theology, 813.



## The Penal Substitution Theory of the Atonement

	Necessity	Substitution	Propitiation	Imputation
<b>Explained</b>	God cannot merely overlook man's sin, nor can he just forgive man without requiring that payment be made or punishment be given for sin. In this sense, the atonement is necessary for man to be made right with his Creator.	The normal meaning of the word is to be taken in this context. It simply means that the atonement is a sacrifice offered in place of the sinner. Thus the sacrifice bears the sinner's guilt.	To regain favor or appease God. To satisfy his demands, and thereby divert his anger. Man's sin does not just make God sad, it makes him angry. His anger, or wrath, can be satisfied only by the execution of his justice. His judicial system cannot be short-circuited.	While substitution and propitiation have to do with negative aspects of the atonement (what God has taken away from us), imputation has to do with the positive aspect of the atonement (what God has given to us). God has taken away the guilt of believers, but he has also imputed to them the righteousness of Christ.
<b>Scripture Reference</b>	Hebrews 9:22	John 1:29; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13	Leviticus 4:35; Romans 3:25-26; 5:9	Romans 6:3-4
<b>Objection</b>	Why does God not simply forgive us as an act of good will instead of requiring a payment?	Is it not improper and unjust to penalize an innocent party?	Doesn't the appeasement of the Father by the Son reveal conflict within the Godhead?	Is it not improper and unfair to reward a guilty party?
<b>Response to Objection</b>	Even if God could overlook sin against himself as an act of good will, he is still bound by his nature to preserve justice in the universe. To ignore sin would destroy the meaningfulness of the concept of justice. Also, humans may simply forgive other humans as an act of good will because we are imperfect and in desperate need of forgiveness ourselves. But God is perfect and does not need forgiveness. Consequently, the parallel between man's and God's forgiveness breaks down.	The answer to this question is yes unless the innocent party receives the penalty voluntarily and the judge is inseparable from the innocent party. Jesus meets both of these requirements. He gave his life willingly (John 10:17-18) and he was inseparable from the Father. Thus in effect, the Judge punished himself.	The answer to this question may be put in the form of another question: Can a person be angry and loving at the same time? Any parent knows that the answer is yes. The Father was angry over the world's sin, but he loved the world so much that he sent his Son to atone for the sin of man. Thus the Father did not change from an angry God to a loving God when Christ died on the cross. God's love was there all the time and was in fact the motivation for the atonement. His holiness demanded a payment for sin. His love provided the payment.	This question is the other side of the objection to substitution. It doesn't seem fair that an innocent party is punished and likewise, it doesn't seem fair that a guilty party is rewarded. Yet that is what happens in the atonement. But the reason that God sees this transaction as "absolutely just" is that when we put our faith in him, we become united with Christ. In a sense, we become married, inseparable, so that it is not a transfer of righteousness as much as holding it in common. It is shared.
<b>Implications About God's Character</b>	Emphasis on God's sovereignty and position of official administrator of the judicial system of the universe.	Emphasis on God's love for his creation. He defines love by his nature. Real love always demands personal sacrifice.	Emphasis on God's absolute holiness and justifiable anger over sin. He deserves respect and absolute obedience and vents his wrath on ungodliness.	Emphasis on God's desire for intimate fellowship with his creation. Because of the atonement we are heirs of the Father and joint-heirs with Son.

### The Nature of the Atonement.

The atonement is a glorious reality. It requires many terms and pictures to do justice to it. We see reconciliation, redemption, justification, propitiation, and so on. None of these may be omitted without serious loss.

Various motifs are proposed as providing the basis for a theory of the atonement. Some of these contain an element of truth, but on their own provide only an inadequate view.

The Moral Influence Theory sees the basic effect of the death of Christ as being in the sinner. It is subjective. The cross reveals divine love, and man is led to new life by seeing the love of God.

It is true that the love of God in Christ should move us. If, however, there was no objective necessity for Christ to die, then the death of Christ is not a manifestation of the love of God, it is a cruel and unnecessary act.

The Christus Victor concept (the so-called "Classical Theory") sees the atonement in terms of the victory of Christ over sin, death, and the devil. While this is thoroughly biblical, it is inadequate in that it fails to recognise that the victory of Christ is so complete simply because He has as our substitute paid the penalty for sin.

It is our position that any theory of the atonement which does not have as its central element that Jesus Christ bore our punishment in our place is inadequate.

#### 1. The Atonement is Objective.

A subjective theory would say that the fundamental effect of the atonement is the effect it has on me, on my feelings, on my life as a whole.

An objective theory says that the fundamental effect of the atonement lies outside of me, that is, the death of Christ is a real transaction between the Father and the Son. That transaction is the basis for our salvation. The evidence for this view is as follows:

a. The O.T. Priesthood which typifies the priesthood of Christ was fundamentally Godward in its activity. The activity of Christ as High Priest must therefore be fundamentally Godward.

b. The O.T. Sacrifices were offered to God. Therefore so was the sacrifice of Christ.

c. The Hebrew "kipper" speaks of atonement for sin by the covering of the sin or the sinner. The blood of sacrifice comes between God and the sinner, and in view of that the wrath of God is turned aside.

The Greek terms hilasmos (1 Jn 2:2; 4:10) and hilasterion (Rom. 3:25), properly translated 'propitiation,' both point to the same idea. Through the sacrifice, the wrath of God is turned away from the sinner.

We must be careful not to misunderstand the wrath of God. Man, even in righteous anger, mixes his anger with sin and loss of temper. God's wrath is His holy revulsion against sin, the strong and settled reaction of His holy nature against all that is sinful.

Rom. 5:9, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

(10) For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

d. The Idea of Reconciliation. The relationship between man and God needs restoration. It was sin that caused the relationship to break down, for God in His holiness and justice could not be at one with the sinner. The sinner was under His wrath (Rom. 5:9), and the sinner himself was hostile to God. God and man can rightly then be called 'enemies' (Rom. 5:10).

For reconciliation to take place, two things are needed. The problem caused by man's sin, that is, the problem of God's wrath towards man, must be removed by the death of Christ. Then also man's hostility must be removed by means of the new birth.

The two sides of reconciliation are seen clearly:

2 Cor. 5:19, " ... God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

(20) Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

First the trespasses have to be dealt with; then comes the invitation.

e. The Idea of Redemption. Redemption is deliverance by the payment of a price, a ransom.

There are twin backgrounds for this metaphor. In the O.T. people who are due to die may be redeemed by the offering of a sacrifice.

(E.g., Ex. 21:29,30) Then in the slavery of N.T. times a slave could be set free by the payment of a price. The sinner is a slave of sin, Jn 8:34, and in the domain of darkness, Col. 1:13.

1 Pet. 1:18, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,

(19) but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

The ransom is not paid to the devil! The devil is owed nothing. In the O.T. background, it is God who demands the death, and so it is to God that the ransom sacrifice is offered. The N.T. never says to whom the ransom is paid, and we do well to copy that reticence.

If we were forced to answer with a gun to our head, we would say that it was sin against God which led to the slavery, and so the ransom is paid to Him to set us free. However, reticence is preferable.

## 2. The Atonement is Penal and Substitutionary.

"Penal" speaks of punishment. "Substitutionary" (or "Vicarious") says that He died in our place, instead of us. We ought to have died, and instead of us He died.

Those who deny the penal, substitutionary nature of the atonement cannot be counted as evangelicals. They object that substitution is unjust. Our response is that if what they want is absolute justice, there is no future for them except hell. Our response is also that it is mighty strange for a rebel sinner to tell God what is and is not fair.

The substitutionary nature of the O.T. sacrifices is seen in the fact that the sinner lays his hand on the sacrifice and confesses his sin. See Lev. 1:4; 4:29-31; 16:21,22. (pp. 28,29 of these notes.)

Other passages showing clearly the penal and substitutionary nature of the atonement:

Is. 53:5, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

(6) All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

(11) ... He will bear their iniquities.

(12) ... He Himself bore the sin of many ... ."

1 Pet. 2:24, "And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

(25) For you were continually straying like sheep ... " (These two verses clearly have Is. 53:5,6 in mind.)

Heb. 9:28, "So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, not to bear sin, to those who eagerly await Him, for salvation."

2 Cor. 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Gal. 3:13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERY ONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE'—"

### 3. It Involves Christ's Active and Passive Obedience.

If it were possible for a man to earn his salvation, he would have to obey the law in its entirety.

We have sinned. That means two things: we have not obeyed the law in its entirety; and we also deserve punishment for sin.

In order to save us, Christ dealt with both of those problems. He dealt with our lack of obedience to the law by obeying the law in its entirety on our behalf. His obedience, throughout His time on earth, is called His active obedience.

He dealt with the punishment we deserve by enduring that punishment Himself on the cross. This is called His passive obedience.

You could say that His passive obedience saved us from hell, and His active obedience earned heaven for us.

We are familiar with the passive obedience of Christ. Scriptures pointing to His active obedience:

John 15:10, "'If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.'"

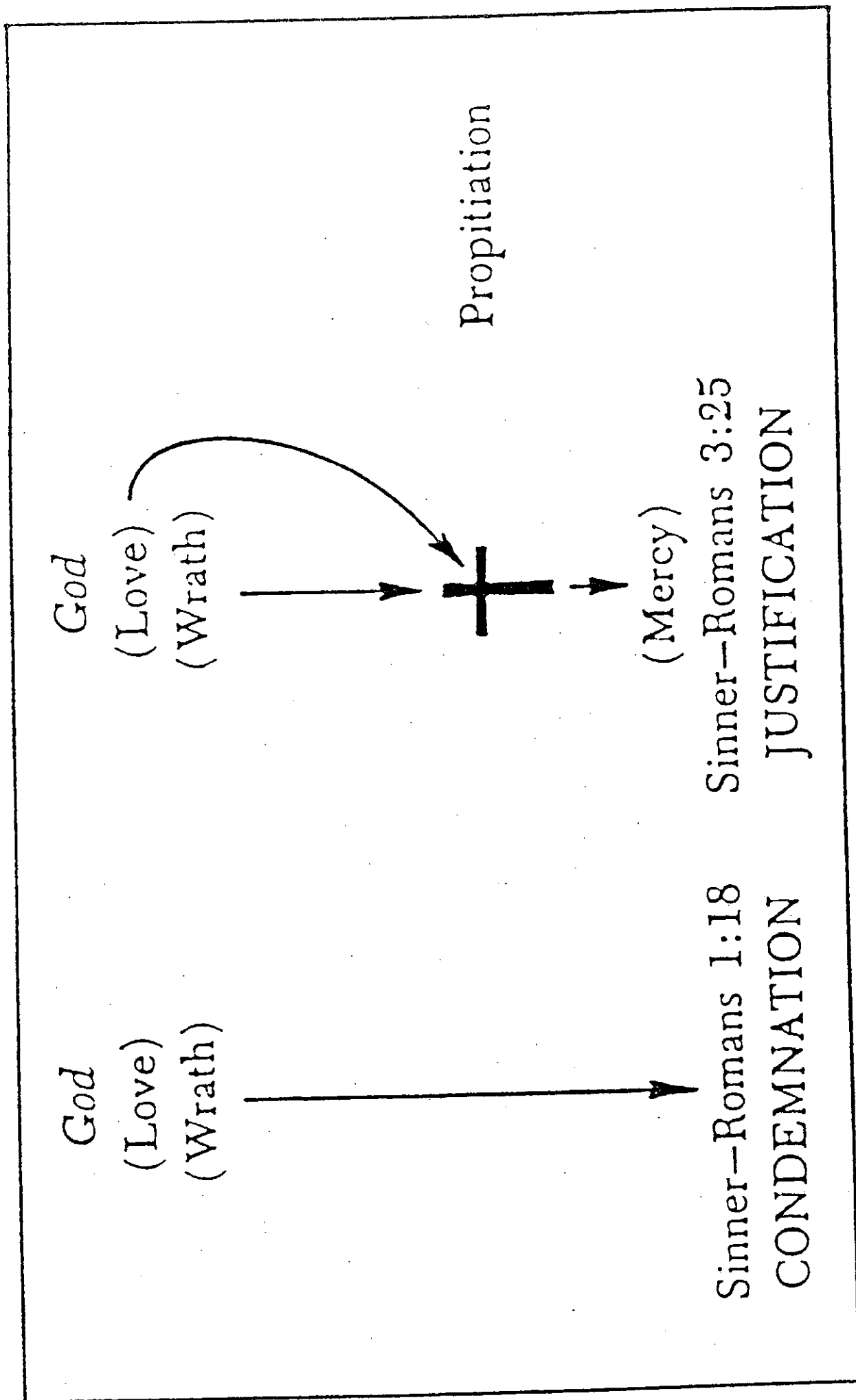
Rom. 5:19, "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."

Rom. 8:3, "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

(4) in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." The requirement of the law includes obedience.

Ph. 3:9, "And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith."

We may diagram the doctrine of propitiation as follows:



In the New Testament, the Greek word ἱλάσκομαι or its derivatives appear in four passages relating to Christ's atoning work on the cross. Recently, modern liberal scholars have vigorously challenged the traditional rendering of the ἱλάσκομαι word group by the word 'propitiation', which means "to turn away the wrath of God by an offering," arguing that the word 'expiation', meaning "the cancellation of sin" or "the removal of sin from God's sight," represents the correct rendering. Behind this highly technical, seemingly unimportant debate lies a far more serious one directly involving the doctrines of God, the Atonement and the Bible.

#### A. The four key passages of Scripture.

1. Rom. 3:25: "whom God set forth to be a propitiation (ἱλαστήριον) His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness...."
2. Heb 2:17: "Therefore...He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest...to make propitiation (ἱλάσκεσθαι) for the sins of the people."
3. 1 Jn. 2:2: "And He Himself is the propitiation (ἱλόμος) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."
4. 1 Jn. 4:10: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (ἱλόμος) for our sins."

#### B. Defining the controversy.

1. All agree that in classical and *koinē* (i.e. "common") Greek the ἱλάσκομαι word group meant 'to propitiate', 'to placate', or 'to appease' an angry deity.
2. All agree that the ἱλάσκομαι word group underwent an important change in meaning when adapted by the Biblical writers for use in the Scriptures. Its biblical usage has "nothing to do with pagan conceptions of a capricious and vindictive deity, inflicting arbitrary punishments on offending worshippers, who must then bribe him...by the appropriate offerings."
3. However, agreement ends over the *extent* of this change in meaning. The proponents of 'expiation' insist that the ἱλάσκομαι word group completely lost all ideas of divine wrath and propitiation. The proponents of propitiation contend that the word group retained both senses.

#### C. Reasons behind the move to replace 'propitiation' with 'expiation'.

1. A radical redefinition of God's wrath against sin. God's wrath is transformed from His personal revulsion to sin determined by His holiness to an impersonal and "inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe." God is not, after all, really angry over sin.
2. A scholarly arrogance which holds that everyone else (from the first century onwards) has been wrong in translating the ἱλάσκομαι word group using the word 'propitiation'.
3. A heterodox view of the Bible. The biblical writers "evolved" in their understanding of God; beginning with the "crude" concept of an angry God, they "advanced" to

where anger as an attitude of God disappeared and "His love and mercy became all-embracing."

4. A rejection of the theory of Penal Substitution. Retributive justice is rejected as "shocking" and contrary to the "Father of mankind's" love for "His children."

#### D. Analysis of the ἱλάσκομαι word group.

##### 1. The work of C. H. Dodd (the leading proponent of expiation).

a. In classical and *koine* Greek. Dodd discovers a dual meaning among profane sources, with 'to propitiate' being the primary meaning and 'to expiate' being a definite, but secondary one.

b. In the LXX. For Dodd, a close study of the LXX is crucial to resolve this "ambiguity" in meaning present in the pagan usage of ἱλάσκομαι.

i. He identifies three groupings according to whether the ἱλάσκομαι word group translates the Hebrew word *kipper* ('to make atonement for'); whether it translates a Hebrew word other than *kipper*; or whether a Greek word other than one of the ἱλάσκομαι word class translates the Hebrew word *kipper*. Dodd builds his analysis upon the associations among these words, with ἱλάσκομαι and *kipper* representing the vast majority (83 out of 105 times). He finds in each that it is the expunging of sin and guilt and not the averting of divine anger which is in view.

ii. He concludes that in the hands of the LXX translators the ἱλάσκομαι word group evolved a meaning "strange to non-biblical Greek," i.e. all vestiges of wrath and propitiation were removed.

##### c. In the New Testament.

i. Dodd substitutes the word 'expiation' for 'propitiation' in each of the four key passages. Thus, they bear the sense of 'performing an act whereby guilt or defilement is removed'. The focus becomes manward, not Godward.

ii. Any other rendering is wrong and illegitimate.

##### 2. The work of Leon Morris (the leading proponent of propitiation).

a. In classical and *koine* Greek. Morris denies that the ἱλάσκομαι word group had a dual meaning. Dodd, he contends, fails to substantiate this claim.

b. In the LXX. Morris criticizes Dodd for ignoring the context, in which the wrath of God figures prominently; for depersonalizing God's wrath; and for reading out of *kipper* any notion of divine wrath and propitiation.

i. The context: "Dodd totally ignores the fact that in many passages there is explicit mention of the putting away of God's anger." Therefore, "his conclusions cannot be accepted without serious modification."



ii. The wrath of God: The Old Testament contains over twenty words which express the wrath of God; overall, there are over 580 references to God's wrath. It is not presented as an impersonal, inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe, but in the most intensely personal terms imaginable.

iii. The meaning of *kipper*: In non-cultic usage (i.e. apart from the sacrificial system), *kipper* especially denotes the averting of divine anger by the payment of a ransom. In cultic usage, though less clear, *kipper* still includes the concepts of divine wrath and propitiation. That the ἱλάσκομαι word group translates *kipper* in the vast majority of cases tends to confirm the propitiatory significance of both words.

iv. Morris concludes that "the words of the ἱλάσκομαι word group...were not eviscerated of their meaning, nor were they given an entirely new meaning...the removal of wrath seems to be definitely in view when this word group is used."

#### c. In the New Testament.

i. If God's wrath is taken seriously, as he thinks it must be, then its removal will be an important part of understanding salvation. God's wrath was just as real for early Christians as it was for men of the old covenant.

ii. The context of the four key passages requires the use of 'propitiation'. Each passage declares that it was God Himself who acted through Jesus Christ to satisfy the just demands of His holy wrath. To use 'expiation' would weaken this truth, since "to speak of expiation is to deal in sub-personal categories...whereas the relationship between God and man must be thought of as personal in the fullest sense."

#### E. 'Propitiation' is the correct translation of the ἱλάσκομαι word group.

1. Because etymological and exegetical analysis demonstrates that, in the Old and New Testaments, the ἱλάσκομαι word group conveyed the averting of divine anger by an offering.

2. Because behind the move to replace 'propitiation' with 'expiation' are the denial of God's *personal* wrath against sin, scholarly arrogance, a heterodox view of Scripture and the rejection of Penal Substitution.

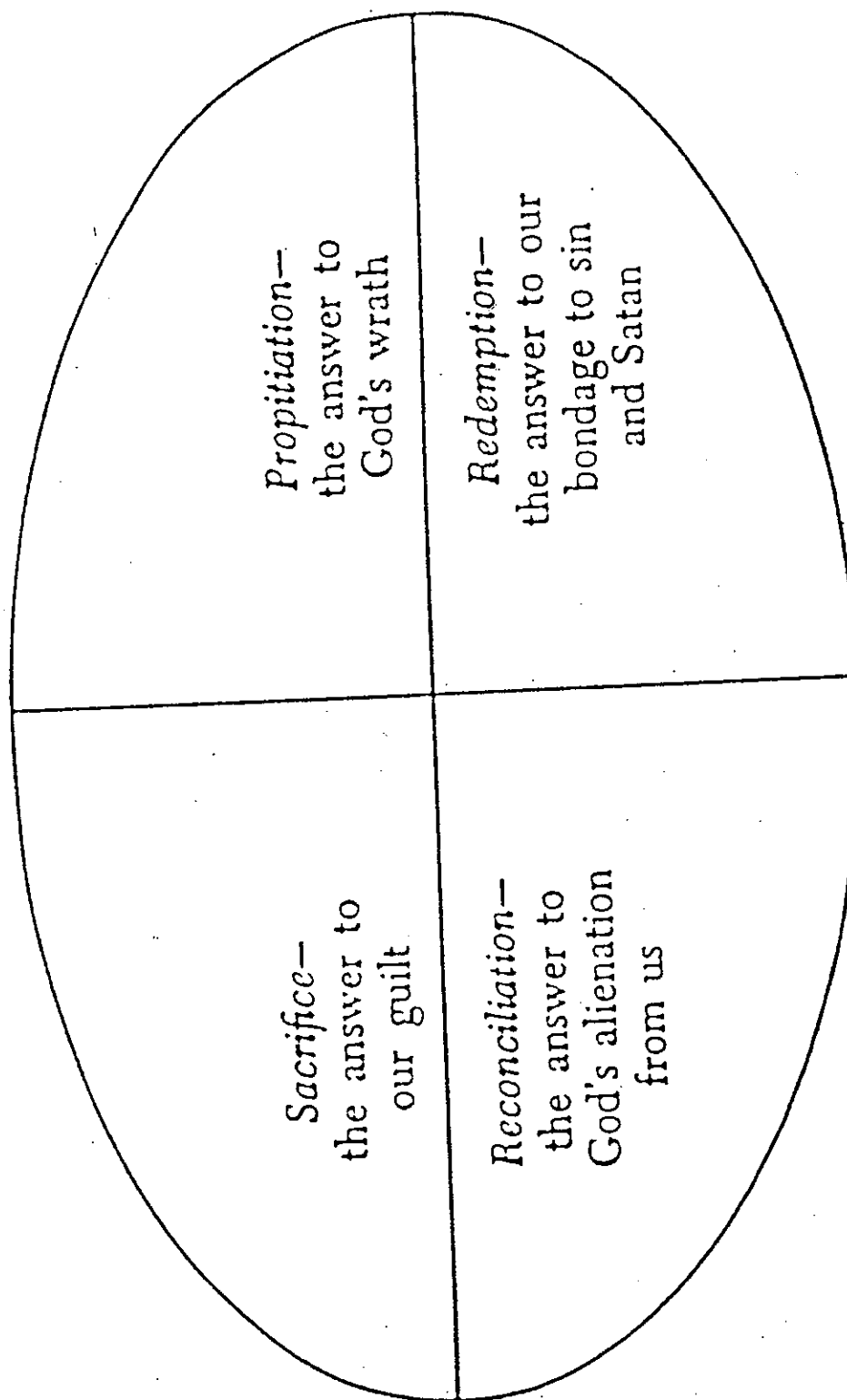
3. Because the use of 'expiation' redefines God's nature by eliminating holiness as an essential attribute of His character. He is love, but His love is no longer a holy love.

4. Because the concept of propitiation witnesses to two great realities: the seriousness of the divine reaction against sin; and the greatness of the divine love which provided the gift to avert the wrath from men.

5. Because the concept of propitiation preserves the full meaning and significance of Christ's atoning work on the cross.

There are four New Testament words which express distinct facets of salvation in Christ: *sacrifice*, *propitiation*, *reconciliation*, and *redemption*. In each of these, man stands in a different relationship before the same God: first as a guilty person, second as an object of God's wrath, third as an enemy, and fourth as a slave.

### A FOURFOLD PICTURE OF CHRIST'S SAVING WORK





# REDEMPTION

*New Testament Word*

*Meaning*

AGORAZO

I CORINTHIANS 6:20

TO BUY IN A SLAVE  
MARKET

EXAGORAZO

GALATIANS 3:13

TO BUY OUT OF A  
SLAVE MARKET

LUTROSIS

TITUS 2:14

MONEY USED TO FREE  
A SLAVE OR PRISONER

APOLUTROSIS

ROMANS 3:24

DELIVERANCE, A RELEASING  
(a strengthened form of  
*lutrosis*)

## Results of the Death of Christ

<p><b>Substitution for Sinners</b></p> <p>Jesus took <i>our</i> place; he bore the penalty for <i>our</i> sins (Luke 22:19-20; John 3:36; 6:51; 15:13; Eph. 1:3; Heb. 2:9; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 5:11-12).</p>	<p><b>The Avoidance of Divine Judgments</b></p> <p>God views sin as judged in the death of his Son. The believer is sheltered under the redeeming blood of Christ (Rom. 2:4-5; 4:17; 9:22; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9, 15).</p>
<p><b>The Fulfillment of the Law</b></p> <p>Jesus' imputed righteousness becomes the believer's righteousness before God as perfect fulfillment of the law (Acts 15:10; Rom 1:16-17; 3:21-22, 31; 4:5, 11, 13-16, 23-24; 5:19; 10:4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:8; 4:19-31; 5:1).</p>	<p><b>Took Away Sins Covered by Sacrifice Before the Cross</b></p> <p>Sins committed between the time of Adam and Christ's death on the cross were covered by sacrifice. In Christ they were taken away (Acts 17:30; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:15; 10:2-26).</p>
<p><b>Redemption From Sin</b></p> <p>God himself paid the ransom of human sin through the death of his Son (Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:23-24).</p>	<p><b>National Salvation of Israel</b></p> <p>The future Israel of faith will have its sins removed (Rom. 9-11, esp. 11:25-29).</p>
<p><b>Reconciliation of Man to God</b></p> <p>God's attitude toward the world has changed completely (Rom. 5:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20-22).</p>	<p><b>Millennial and Eternal Blessings Upon the Gentiles</b></p> <p>Millennial earthly blessings, which are assured to Israel, will be shared by the Gentiles (Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 15:17; Rev. 21:24).</p>
<p><b>Propitiation Toward God</b></p> <p>God's righteousness and law have been vindicated (satisfied) (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 4:16; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).</p>	<p><b>The Spoiling of Principalities and Powers</b></p> <p>Christ gained direct legal victory at the cross over Satan and his hosts (John 12:31, 16:11; Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:14-15).</p>
<p><b>Judgment of the Sin Nature</b></p> <p>The sin nature was judged at the cross and is now able to be controlled by the Spirit in the believer's life. The believer positionally shares with Christ his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.</p>	<p><b>The Ground of Peace</b></p> <p>The cross brought peace between God and man (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:13-14a; Col. 1:20), between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14-18; Col. 3:11), and universal peace (1 Cor. 15:27-28; Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 1:20).</p>
<p><b>Forgiveness and Cleansing</b></p> <p>The believer in Jesus has forgiveness and cleansing in both justification and sanctification through Christ's blood and continuing advocacy in heaven (1 John 1:1-2:2).</p>	<p><b>The Purification of Things in Heaven</b></p> <p>Heavenly "things" were purified on the ground of Christ's blood (Heb. 9:23-24).</p>

## The Extent of the Atonement

### I. Introduction

Though not extensively discussed in our own day (the reasons clearly being the popularity of liberal theologies and an anthropocentric autonomous world view), the extent of the atoning work of Christ and purpose(s) for which Christ died were greatly debated in the past. In the early 17th century this was especially true in the conflict between Calvinist and Arminians. The issue before us is well stated by Robert Lightener when he writes,

Unlimited Atonement, p. 33, "The task before us ... is to discover a Biblical answer to the question, 'Why did Christ die?' After settling that issue, we will then be in a position to ask a second question, 'What is the extent of the atonement?' or 'For whom did Christ die?' ... There is no question about it; the issue between limited and unlimited atonement centers in the design or purpose of the redemptive work of Christ."

Before proceeding to examine certain perspective, several points of clarifications are in order.

1. All evangelicals limit the atonement in some sense. To affirm an absolute unlimited atonement would be universalism (sometimes called "Objective Universalism; Karl Barth).
2. The application of the atonement is the focus of some: "Did the Father in sending Christ, and did Christ in coming into the world to make atonement for sin, do this with the design or for the purpose of saving only the elect or all men? That is the question, and that only is the question." L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 394. This focus claims to be justified by the fact that Christ's death on the cross actually accomplished the salvation of the elect, and therefore the extent of the application signifies the extent of the provision of the cross. This position is identified by terms such as limited atonement and particular redemption. It sees the application of the atonement to be equal with its provision.
3. The provision of the atonement is the focus of others: "Did Christ purpose to make provision for the elect whom God would mysteriously draw to Himself, and also for the non-elect, whom God would mysteriously pass over, but whose salvation He nevertheless desires?" This focus claims to be justified by the fact that Christ's death on the cross only potentially accomplished the salvation of the elect, and therefore the extent of the provision may be broader than the extent of the application. This position is popularly referred to as unlimited atonement.

or general atonement or universal redemption; (though the term itself it is understood has a restricted meaning). This view says the death of Christ purposed and accomplished a universal provision which will have a limited application or efficacy; being applied only to those who respond by faith.

Originally (historically) the debate came to a head between 1610 and 1618 as followers of John Calvin and Jacob Arminius clashed. Two antithetical systems of soteriology were set forth, their major characteristics being summarized in the following chart:

#### CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM CONTRASTED

Doctrine	Arminianism	Calvinism
Depravity	As a result of the Fall, man has inherited a corrupted nature. Preventive grace has removed the guilt and condemnation of Adam's sin.	As a result of the Fall, man is totally depraved and dead in sin; he is unable to save himself. Because he is dead in sin, God must initiate salvation.
Imputation of Sin	God did not impute sin to the entire human race through Adam's sin, but all people inherit a corrupt nature as a result of Adam's fall.	Through Adam's transgression, sin was imputed—passed to the entire human race so that all people are born in sin.
Election	God elected those whom He knew would believe of their own free will. Election is conditional, based on man's response in faith.	God unconditionally, from eternity past, elected some to be saved. Election is not based on man's future response.
Atonement of Christ	Christ died for the entire human race, making all mankind saveable. His death is effective only in those who believe.	God determined that Christ would die for all those whom God elected. Since Christ did not die for everyone but only for those who were elected to be saved, His death is completely successful.
Grace	Through preventive or preparatory grace, which is given to all people, man is able to cooperate with God and respond to Him in salvation. Preventive grace reverses the effects of Adam's sin.	Common grace is extended to all mankind but is insufficient to save anyone. Through irresistible grace God drew to Himself those whom He had elected, making them willing to respond.
Will of Man	Preventive grace is given to all people and is exercised on the entire person, giving man a free will.	Depravity extends to all of man, including his will. Without irresistible grace man's will remains bound, unable to respond to God on its own ability.
Perseverance	Believers may turn from grace and lose their salvation.	Believers will persevere in the faith. Believers are secure in their salvation; none will be lost.
Sovereignty of God	God limits His control in accordance with man's freedom and response. His decrees are related to His foreknowledge of what man's response will be.	God's sovereignty is absolute and unconditional. He has determined all things according to the good pleasure of His will. His foreknowledge originates in advanced planning, not in advanced information.

Several points of history are noteworthy as this stage:

1. Strict five point Calvinism was modified by some over time into a modified four point system (limited atonement or particular redemption being rejected). Moses Amyrall (1596-1664) was a popularizer of this approach.
2. Numerous Baptist (often designated historically as Particular Baptist) of significance have apparently been five point Calvinist (ex. Bunyan, Gill, Fuller(?), Dagg(?), Spurgeon, Boyce, Broadus(?), Manly Sr. and Jr., Carroll(?))
3. Several important contemporary evangelicals are to be numbered among this group (ex. Packer, Boice, Sproul, L. Johnson and Nettles)

A Practical Question: What is at stake?

1. One's concept of the nature of God and His decrees.
2. One's perception of the theological mystery about divine sovereignty and human responsibility and their relationship.
3. One's model of the atonement: Qualitative or Quantitative or Both?
4. One's presentation of the gospel and his/her understanding of and commitment to evangelism/missions.

## II. The Case for Particular Redemption

A. Theological principles support it.

1. The actual rather than potential nature of the atonement demands limited atonement.
  - a. From the salvation of only the elect: "Since Christ's death actually saves those for whom He died, even securing faith for them, and only the elect are saved, Jesus must have died only the elect."  
If someone objects that man's free will could frustrate the purpose of God, and therefore someone for whom Christ died could refuse to be saved, then that objector must be reminded that the sovereign purposes of God cannot be thwarted. The key idea is that the application determines the provision and vice versa.
  - b. From the condemnation of the non-elect: "Since the non-elect are condemned for their sins (Jn.

3:36; 8:24), but Jesus has already actually been punished for some sins, He must not have been punished for the non-elects's sins, since the same sins couldn't be punished twice, having been fully punished at the cross. If someone objects that unbelief could account for the condemnation of non-Christians, then that objector must be reminded that Jesus also shed his blood for sins of unbelief. (This latter statement is usually a argument by the Universalist, e.g. Lightner).

2. The decree to save only the elect logically leads one to expect an actual provision only for the elect. Why would God provide for those whom He knew He would not save? This is logic of supralapsarianism.

#### Supralapsarianism

1. The decree to save some and condemn others.
2. The decree to create both the elect and the reprobate.
3. The decree to permit the fall of both classes.
4. The decree to provide salvation only for the elect.

#### Infralapsarianism

1. The decree to create human beings.
2. The decree to permit the fall.
3. The decree to save some and condemn others.
4. The decree to provide salvation only for the elect.

#### Sublapsarianism (unlimited atonement with a limited application)

1. The decree to create human beings.
2. The decree to permit the fall.
3. The decree to provide salvation sufficient for all.
4. The decree to choose some to receive this salvation.



## Order of the Decrees

Supralapsarian (Limited Atonement)	Infralapsarian (Limited Atonement)	Amyraldian (Unlimited Atonement)	Lutheran	Wesleyan	Roman Catholic
Creation of man with a view to electing some to eternal life and damning others to eternal perdition	Permission of fall of man results in guilt, corruption, total inability.	Permission of fall of man results in corruption, guilt, moral inability.	Permission of fall of man results in guilt, corruption, total inability.	Permission of fall of man results in guilt, corruption, total inability.	Permission of fall of man results in loss of supernatural righteousness.
Permission of fall of man results in guilt, corruption, total inability	Election of some to life in Christ	Gift of Christ to render salvation possible to all	Gift of Christ to render satisfaction for sins of world	Gift of Christ to render satisfaction for sins of world	Gift of Christ to render satisfaction for all human sins
Gift of Christ to redeem the elect	Gift of Christ to redeem the elect	Election of some for gift of moral ability	Gift of means of grace to communicate saving grace	Remission of original sin to all and gift of sufficient grace to all	Institution of church, the sacraments, to apply satisfaction of Christ
Gift of the Holy Spirit to save the re-deemed	Gift of the Holy Spirit to save the re-deemed	Gift of the Holy Spirit to work moral ability in the elect	Predestination to life of those who do not resist the means of grace	Predestination of life of those who improve sufficient grace	Application of satisfaction of Christ through sacraments, under operation of second causes
Sanctification of all the redeemed and regenerated	Sanctification of all the redeemed and regenerated	Sanctification by the Spirit	Sanctification through the means of grace	Sanctification of all who cooperate with sufficient grace	Building up in holy life of all to whom the sacraments are communicated

B. Specific passages of Scripture support it.

1. Scripture supports the premises in the first principle that the death of Jesus (a) actually saves men (b) secures faith for the believer and (c) allows for the condemnation of unbelievers.

- a. It saves men. Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:7

Rom. 5:10

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

2 Cor. 5:21

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Gal. 1:4

Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

Eph. 1:7

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace,

- b. It secures faith. Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29

Eph. 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

Phil. 1:29

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

- c. It allows for the condemnation of unbelievers. Rev. 20:10-15; Jn. 8:24

Rev. 20:10-15

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And 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.

Jn. 8:24

"I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins."

2. Scripture repeatedly designates a limited number of people for whom Jesus died: "his sheep" Jn. 10:11, 15; "his church", Acts 20:28; "his people", Matt. 1:21; "the elect", Rom. 8:32-35; "the many", Matt. 20:28. (Implication: those not included in these groups are not those for whom He died).

Jn. 10:11, 15

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Acts 20:28

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

Matt. 1:21

"And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

Rom. 8:32-35

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies: who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Matt. 20:28

just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

3. Similarly, Scripture designates a limited number of people for whom Jesus prayed. And since, "the sacrificial work of Christ and His intercessory work are simply two different aspects of his atoning work, ... the scope of the one can be no wider than the scope of the other." (Jn. 17:9) For whom He prays He saves."

"I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine;

c. The arguments for unlimited atonement are unconvincing.

1. The arguments that the Bible teaches Jesus died for the "world" or for "all" is unconvincing because it is most likely that "world" and "all" are used in a limited sense.

\* It is certainly the case that these words are used in a limited sense at times. Contextual clues will be the key!

- a. "World" may clearly be used in a limited sense. Jn. 7:4; 12:19; Rom. 11:12, 15

Jn 7:4

"For no one does anything in secret, when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."

Jn. 12:19

The Pharisees therefore said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

Rom. 11:12, 15

Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

- b. "All" may clearly be used in a limited sense. Rom. 5:18; 1 Cor. 15:22; Tit. 2:11

Rom. 5:18

Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

1 Cor. 15:22

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

Tit. 2:11

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,

- c. "World" and "all" are used to emphasize the breadth of God's outreach to all kinds of people and to all kinds of places. His outreach goes beyond the "righteous" and beyond the nation of Israel.
2. The argument that the gospel is offered to all men is unconvincing, because the offer of the gospel does not include the proclamation that "Christ died for you" but that all who trust in Him will be forgiven.
  3. The argument that the Bible describes some non-elect individuals as people for whom Christ died is

unconvincing, because better interpretations explain the passages. In 2 Pet. 2:1, for example, Peter likely is either a) not saying Jesus died for these false teachers or b) saying sarcastically or graciously that the false teachers claim that Jesus died for them.

### III. The Case for Unlimited Atonement

#### A. Theological principles support it.

1. God often provides more than is appropriated.
  - a. In general revelation there is more present than perceived, provided than appropriated.
  - b. In special revelation the same is true.
2. God normally has more than one purpose in his work.
  - a. In general revelation (Rom. 1:18-32)..
    1. It can be the basis for condemnation.
    2. It can be a step to salvation.
  - b. In special revelation (The signs in the Gospel of John).
    1. It can be the basis for condemnation.
    2. It can be a step to salvation.

#### B. Specific passages of Scripture support it.

1. Scripture repeatedly designates those for whom Christ died as being "all" those of the "world". It is true that some of these passages may use "all" or "world" in a limited sense, but it is unlikely contextually and upon exegetical investigation that in every case this is true. Three passages seem especially difficult to explain as using "world" or "all" in a limited sense: 1 Jn. 2:2; 1 Tim. 2:1-6; 4:10

##### a. 1 Jn. 2:2

and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only (the elect/redeemed), but also for those of the whole world (lost/potentially saved).

##### b. 1 Tim. 2:1-6 (its argument)

"First of all then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are

in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time."

N.B.- Two reasons are given for praying for all men: (1) for tranquility of life (2) because it is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. To substantiate the second reason he cites two supports: (a) God desires all men to be save (b) Christ gave Himself a ransom for all. (To further argue for the universality of the gospel Paul cites the oneness of God-cf. Rom. 3:29). The two supports can argue best for praying for all men on the unlimited view.

c. 1 Tim. 4:10

"... we have set our hope on the living God, who is Saviour of all men, especially of those who have faith."

2. Scripture designates unbelievers as those whom the Master has bought. 2 Pet. 2:1

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

N.B.- The limited or particular redemptionist understands "Lord who bought them" as a mockery of their claim and not a statement of their position before the Master. But Peter is setting forth the most blatant heresy-denial of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this could only mean either a denial of His person (probably deity) or work or both. Now on the limited view we must suppose that these who have the audacity to deny at least His person (and possibly work) could have the inconsistency of at the same time affirming His work of redemption-impossible if denial is of His work, and unlikely if they deny His person, for that is the basis of His work.

On the unlimited view, however, their heresy is genuinely accentuated (and not mocked) by pointing out that the denial is of the Great One who gave His life for them. They are indeed convicted of sin, because they do not believe in Him (Jn. 16:7-11).

3. Scripture records many universal offers of the gospel (Jn. 3:16; Rev. 22:17) and many offers of the gospel to people not known to be elect. Since the offer of the gospel is the offer of the gift of the Son (Jn. 3:16; Jn. 4:10), and the Son cannot be separated from his work (since apart from that work there is no gift) then the Son's death for sin must be the gift offered even to the non-elect.

As Chafer said, "It would seem unnecessary to point out that men cannot reject what does not even exist, and if Christ did not die for the non-elect, they cannot be condemned for unbelief (Jn. 3:18)." Chafer, Soteriology, p. 187.

4. Scripture records Jesus' prayer for the forgiveness of those who crucified him: (Lk. 23:34a) "Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." These who acted in ignorance included not only the Roman and Jewish leaders but also the people of Israel. (Acts 3:17) "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also." Only a portion of these acting in ignorance ultimately believed. Nevertheless, forgiveness was asked for them. Assuming that God granted the prayer of the Son, and offered a forgiveness to even the non-elect, the basis of that forgiveness must likely have been only Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus' death for all men, then, seems implicit in his first words from the cross.
5. Scripture records that Jesus looked and loved the Rich Young Ruler (Mk. 10:21). There is no assurance he was ever saved. This certainly refutes the hyper-Calvinist view that God has no love for the non-elect.

C. The arguments for limited atonement are unconvincing.

1. The arguments from the actual rather than potential nature of the atonement rests on the false premises that (a) Christ's death personally appropriated salvation for individuals and (b) it provided no basis of condemnation for the non-elect.



- a. Christ's death provides a potential salvation, not an actual one, in the sense that even the elect are unsaved until they believe (from the human perspective; Eph. 2:1-3). Or, in other words, the death of Christ is not the only soteriological factor, even though it is primary, and, in many passages, the only one mentioned. His death is the material cause of salvation, faith and repentance the instrumental causes. It could be said Christ's provision of salvation is actual and complete in its sufficiency, but requires faith for its efficiency.
- b. No scripture teaches that the death of Christ "purchased faith", nor that faith is a foreign entity placed in the heart of man. God in his mysterious providence and by a free gift of grace brings about faith (Acts 16:14; Eph. 2:8-9), it is true, just as He mysteriously works all things after the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11). But it is the man who believes and is commanded to believe (Acts. 16:31).

N.B.- Eph. 2:8 does teach that salvation is from God. The issue developed in this text is not whether faith is from God or man, but whether salvation is of God by grace, or by man and his works. The conclusion is that it is all of grace and God's gift. It would seem that "saving faith" is included in this gift, and is therefore something God graciously bestows mysteriously.

- c. The potential nature of the atonement then means that Jesus has actually paid for the sins but that that payment is not personally appropriated until a person is united to Christ and Christ's death is accepted as his own by faith. Thus the nonbeliever may be condemned for his own sins until he repents and believes, just as the elect person for whom Christ died, is nevertheless lost experientially, in darkness, dead in trespasses and sins, and under wrath, until he believes.
2. The argument that the decree to save the elect logically leads to limited atonement rests on the false premise that one can deduce hidden parts of the decree of God from revealed parts of the decree. But the things revealed do not help one discover the things hidden in the decree of God. God decrees evil, for example, but He fights against it. God

decrees the salvation of the elect, but could certainly provide for more than the elect. In fact, it seems just as likely, if not more likely, that God would make provision for the salvation of the non-elect, Reformed theologians acknowledge He desires to save, than that he would provide only for the salvation of the elect, whom He has decreed to save. At any rate, one can certainly not deduce that the salvation of the elect, revealed to be in the decree of God, helps one discover that provision only for the elect is also in the decree of God.

3. The argument that certain Scripture specifies a limited number for whom Jesus died rests on the false premise that these passages intend to include all for whom Jesus died. But this is as faulty as arguing that when Paul said, "he gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20), Paul meant to teach that Jesus didn't die for others.

#### IV. Conclusion

- A. The issue is to be biblical and not necessarily logical. Both traditional Calvinism and Arminianism are logical systems. But, are they Biblically defensible at every point?
- B. The issue is not, "Did the Father in sending Christ, and did Christ in coming into the world to make atonement for sin, do this with the design or for the purpose of saving only the elect or all men?", but rather, "Did Christ purpose to make provision for the elect whom God would mysteriously draw to Himself, and also for the non-elect, whom God mysteriously pass over, but whose salvation He nevertheless desires?"
- C. The answer is yes, and it is substantiated by the theological principles derived from God's normally abundant provision and multiple purposes, by a model of the atonement that incorporated the potential nature of the benefits of the cross, and by specific passages of Scripture designating Jesus' death as also for the non-elect, and therefore as part of the good news offered to them.
  - \* The Atonement is to be viewed from a theocentric perspective.
  - \* The Atonement is to sufficient for all but efficient for the elect (those who believe)
- D. Common Objections

Unlimited atonement leads to universalism if logically consistent - No, the universal aspect is conditioned by faith.

- Limited redemption militates against evangelism. No, some of the greatest evangelists have been limited redemptionists.

#### E. Summary Observations

1. Theologically, the Calvinistic-Arminian debates are important. The issues are basic. The feelings are strong. Therefore it is usually a test of: theological skill. If the debate has taught and illustrated anything, it has been the lesson that extremes are problematic and dangerous. In Paul's usage doctrinal presentations are usually couched in explanatory contexts and should be used accordingly (e.g., Rom. 1-11). The imperatives of Christian responsibility frequently follow in hortatory or motivational contexts (as Romans 12-16). The reversal of this pattern or the neglect of either element can generate much misunderstanding. The relevance of the issue lies in the need to balance the doctrine of election with the motivation to evangelism in expository preaching.

Christian goodwill and unity. The debates have transpired between believers, and in many cases polarization has resulted. In the heat of debate (often constructive) one tends to forget in historical perspective that great struggles and thinkers have preceded and that he may not have the normative answers to the problems. The real problem in a doctrine like election may be in our lack of omniscience. At any rate, the end (or retrospect) of the strict and most moderate Calvinists is essentially the same (the elect believe, Acts 13:48).

2. Contextual interpretation is especially important in this debate, for the student may find that over-generalization is a common cause of misunderstanding and lack of credibility. One may note discussions of the "all" passages in this regard, where potential interpretations (what can it mean?) take the place of plain interpretation (what does it probably mean in this passage?).
3. There is a tendency on this issue for crucial words and phrases to be used in a superficial way. More important for the student than his "number of points: on either scale is his proper understanding of the concept(s) and their implications (e.g., depravity, "grace," "faith," etc.).

4. While tension may exist between varying degrees of Calvinism, it is safe to say that division exists between Calvinists and Arminians (in most cases) on the issues of grace and security.
5. These categories and positions are presented as a flexible structure by which the student can evaluate major alternatives. It is not meant for rigid stereotypes, for exceptions can be found in every case.

#### The Extent of the Atonement: A Comparison

##### PARTICULARIST

The Death of Jesus was intended to secure salvation for the elect.

- A. Developed during the Reformation, either with Calvin or with his followers.
- B. It combines the implications of the Doctrine of Election and the Satisfaction Theory of the Substitutionary Atonement.
- C. Development not complete until 1618 at the Synod of Dort (Church council in Holland).
  - ARMINIUS argued against the Doctrine of Election.
  - Synod responded with 5 points (of Calvinism) T.U.L.I.P. to refute Arminians.
  - This became the Westminster Confession, Baptist (London) Confession.
- D. Espoused by Southern Baptist in 19th Century.

##### Scriptural Arguments/Evidences

Jn. 10:11, 15 - Christ died for His sheep  
 Acts 20:28 - Christ died for His Church  
 Rm. 8:32-35 - Mt. 1:21 Christ died for His people

##### Death is an accomplished fact

Mt. 18:11, Rm. 5:10, 2 Cor. 5:21, Gal. 1:4, 3:13, Eph. 1:7

The passages that include "all" means "all kinds," the "world" means non-Jews.

##### Theological Reasons

- A. God's purposes are always efficacious and can never be frustrated by humans.
- B. It is clear that not everyone is saved, therefore, if the Death of Christ was intended to save all, then it is not doing its job.

- C. If Christ died for everyone, God would be unfair to require double payment of sins. i.e., His death and theirs (unbelievers death).
- D. To say that Christ died for everyone logically (if pushed to an extreme) leads to universalism.
- E. Christ died, not just to make salvation possible, but to actually save us; to say that Christ only provided salvation leads to the possibility that there will be none saved.
- F. There are no conditions to be met in order to be saved, because repentance & Faith are Grace Gifts secured on the Cross.
- G. The Trinity works logically together -
  - God elects some
  - Son Redeems some
  - Spirit Applies Salvation
 The most logically sound position

#### GENERAL

The Death of Christ was intended to provide salvation for everyone.

#### GENERAL (UNIVERSAL) ATONEMENT Moses Amyrant, Amyraldianism

Christ's Death was intended for all, whether or not all believed -

- To those who believed, it is redemptively applied.
- To those who do not believe, it provides the benefits of common grace.
- Most Importantly, it removes any excuse for being lost.

Historically, it is the Patristic Position, the Lutheran side of the Reformation and of the Anabaptist.

The Majority of Churchmen & Evangelicals hold to this position.

#### BIBLICAL EVIDENCE - Passages say Christ died for all

Is. 53:6; 1 Jn. 2:2; 1 Tim. 2:1-6; \*1 Tim. 4:10 (summary);  
 Heb. 2:4, 2:9, 2 Pet. 2:1  
 1 Tim. 1:15, Rom. 5:6-8 Christ died for sinners  
 The "all" & "world" passages do not have to be strained.

#### THEOLOGICAL REASONS

- A. God is fair in condemning those who reject the offer of Salvation, He is not exacting judgment twice because the

results & benefits of Christ's death are not applied until one believes.

- B. It is not denied that the Scriptures affirm that Christ died for His own, but it is nowhere said just for them.
- C. The Scriptures affirm that Christ died for sinners (1 Tim. 1:15; Rom. 5:6-8) which means all lost humanity.
- D. One can more consistently offer the Gospel to all.
- E. It allows us to base our Assurance of salvation on the finished Cross Work of Christ.

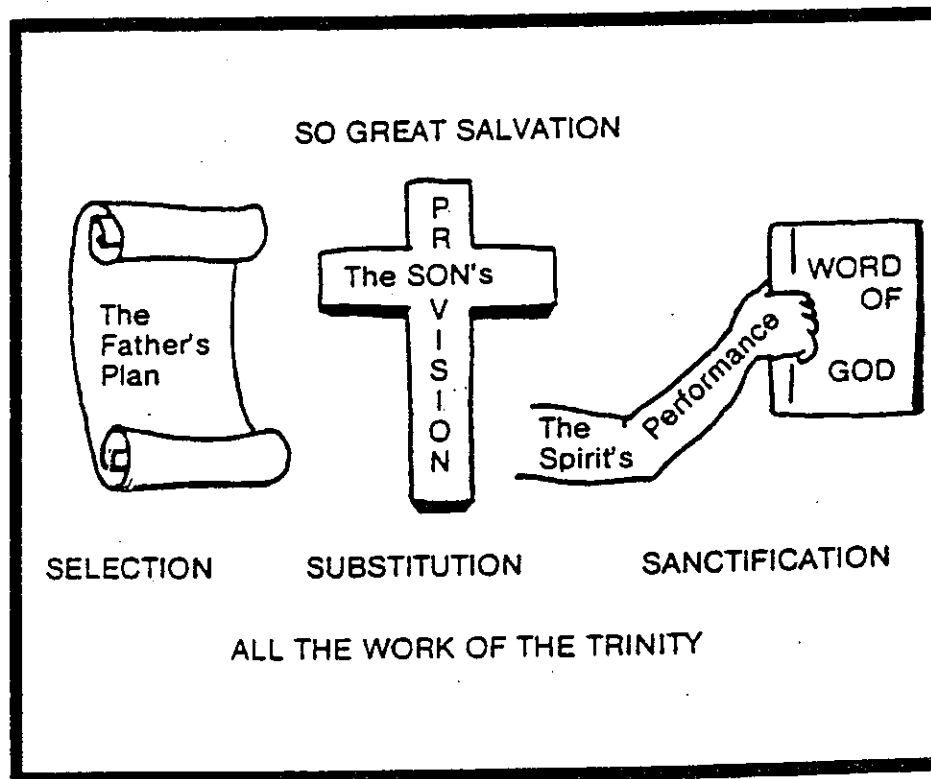
CROSS

WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

BELIEVING

←---Particular's direction of verification  
General's direction of verification---→

(both are to be affirmed)



# The Extent of the Atonement

Unlimited Atonement	
<b>Statement of View</b>	The death of Christ was sufficient for all people, but efficient for a limited number.
Support	Objections
Numerous verses seem to indicate that the death of Christ was for the whole of mankind. The major two verses are 1 Timothy 4:10 and 1 John 2:2. These state that Christ is the propitiation and the Savior of the world. Other verses are Isaiah 53:6; John 1:29; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:11; Hebrews 2:9.	The words "all" and "whole" do not always refer to the totality of its contents. An example is the taxing of the whole world by Caesar; this did not include the Japanese. The whole world in these verses means people of every geographical area.
The universal proclamation of the Gospel is based on the unlimited atonement of Christ. In order for the Gospel to be sincerely offered to all mankind, Christ had to have died for all mankind (Matt. 24:14; 28:19; Acts 1:8; 17:30).	The proclamation of the Gospel is based on the finished work of Christ. The elect are throughout the world, and they need to hear the Gospel in order to be saved. The taking of the Gospel is a matter of obedience, not unlimited atonement.
The love of God is toward the whole world and whoever believes is saved. Therefore, the extent of Christ's death is to all people.	The love of God is toward a special group, as seen in his love of Israel (Amos 3:2). His love is toward the elect of every geographical area of the world. Those that believe are those God has given to the Son (John 6:37-40).
The work of Christ is sufficient to secure the salvation of the elect but is secured by means of faith (Rom. 10:17).	If the death of Christ was all-sufficient; faith becomes unnecessary and meaningless.
The natural benefits of the world are also enjoyed by the nonelect. These benefits include sunshine, rain, good health, etc.	The natural benefits are a result of God's common grace. These things are given from God because of his character. He can be kind to whom he wishes.
Limited Definite Atonement	
<b>Statement of View</b>	Christ's coming was not to provide salvation for all mankind, but to render certain the salvation of the elect.
Support	Objections
Those who advocate a limited atonement say that God provided salvation only for his people (Matt. 1:21), his sheep (John 10:15, 26), his friends (John 15:13), the church (Acts 20:28), and the bride (Eph. 5:25).	The atonement will not save all men, but is available for all. These verses refer to those whom God chose. It is these that have made the atonement efficient.
Those for whom Christ died are those whom the Father gave to him (John 6:37-40). Christ did not die for those whom the Father did not give him. Therefore, it was for a certain number that he died.	These verses do not mention a limited atonement. That only a certain number are chosen is evident because not all will be saved.
Christ died for the elect in every area of the world. This is what the Scripture means when it says that Christ died for the whole world (1 Tim. 4:10; 1 John 2:2).	That the death of Christ was for all mankind makes more sense than that he died for people of every geographical area.
What connection does the death of Christ have with the nonelect? If he died for all, why are some people not saved?	The death of Christ makes potential the salvation of all, but it will be actual only to a certain number. This is the only connection; those who reject this must bear the consequences.
The Intercessory work of Christ was for his own. Since he prayed only for a certain group, he intended to provide salvation for a limited number.	Only a certain number will actually be saved. Christ knew who these would be and these are the people he prayed for.
The work of Christ is said to be for specific groups: Paul, Israel, the church. This shows that his work is not unlimited in scope.	His salvation is made actual to certain groups, but he died for all. The groups who realize salvation are only a subset of those for whom he died.

# “Who Do Scholars Say That I Am?”

A psychic, a sage, a cynic, or a magician,  
say those who purge the supernatural  
from the Gospels. But what do we say?

JAMES R. EDWARDS

Nothing seems more incongruous than scholarship as a spectator sport and scholars as celebrities. Academic types ply their trade in the solitude of book-lined studies and read long papers before learned societies. If scholarship goes public, it's strictly low-profile: reviews of published works, an occasional quotation by the news media, or, for the select few, a Nobel, Templeton, or other coveted prize. Otherwise, the business of publicity is ill-suited to this world, a garish intrusion into an art that demands concentration and cognitive judgments.

Or so it has seemed until the public-relations blitz of the Jesus Seminar, a highly publicized scholarly think tank that has met twice yearly since 1985 to vote on the historical accuracy of the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels. The Jesus Seminar has made Jesus into a media event. Seminar members cast ballots on each saying attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, including the Gospel of Thomas, which was discovered in 1945 and is considered by most scholars to represent an erratic gnostic Christianity. A red ballot indicates that a given statement (or something like it) was spoken by Jesus; a pink ballot, that a statement resembles something Jesus might have said; a gray ballot, that, although the ideas may be close to those of Jesus, the statement did not

originate with him. A black ballot is a definite negative—the statement was derived from later tradition. All sayings, it is assumed, are black unless they can be “proven” to be a different hue.

The result of the voting is a sensation for the media, but dismal for Bible-believing Christians: 82 percent of the words attributed to Jesus were not spoken by him. Only one statement in the Gospel of Mark (generally regarded by most New Testament scholars to be the earliest and most reliable Gospel) is judged to have come from Jesus: “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Mark 12:17)!

As for the Gospel of John, “the Fellows of the Seminar were unable to find a single saying they could with certainty trace back to the historical Jesus.” The seminar, in fact, regards “the Fourth Gospel as alien to the real Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth” (Robert W. Funk et al., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus: A New Translation and Commentary*, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993, pp. 10, 33). Such “breakthroughs” have been widely promoted by the members of the Jesus Seminar in press conferences and releases, appearances on talk shows, interviews, and appeals to tabloid media.

In reality, what is new in the Jesus Seminar is not its low opinion of the historical reliability of the Gospels. The

seminar employs the same methods and reaches conclusions similar to those reached by liberal scholarship for decades. What is new—in addition to the marketing mania—is a theological bias against church, faith, and creed. The “church” is portrayed as a medieval backdrop of inquisition and censorship. By contrast, *The Five Gospels*, the seminar’s translation of the Gospels, is “not bound by the dictates of church councils” or “the church’s stranglehold over learning.” With Prometheanchutzpah, the seminar hails itself as liberator from the “tyranny,” “oppression,” and “blindness” of Jesus’ Babylonian captivity by orthodox Christianity.

“The Christ of creed and dogma,” according to *The Five Gospels*, “can no longer command the assent of those who have seen the heavens through Galileo’s telescope.” The real Jesus can no longer be hidden behind “the cloistered precincts of faith.” “Old deities and demons” have been swept from the skies. In the Jesus Seminar, “biblical scholars [have risen] to the challenge and launch[ed] the tumultuous search for the Jesus behind the Christian façade of the Christ.” The Apostles’ Creed, asserts *The Five Gospels*, “smothers the historical Jesus,” overwhelming him with the heavenly figure of later Christian conviction. The goal of the seminar is to purge Jesus of the barnacles





LEE BOLTIN/SUPPER AT EMMANUEL, IVO DUIĆ, YUGOSLAVIA, 1916

## A "designer" Jesus who champions our causes and espouses our ideologies would have scarcely gotten himself crucified.

of ritual, creed, and dogma and sanitize him for the academy. The seminar claims to have dispelled the age of darkness by the light of reason: the wine of myth has become the water of reality.

Such scholarly triumphalism is both melodramatic and misleading. The state of gospel research is far different from the liberation from oppression and conspiracy theories presented in *The Five Gospels* and propagated in media appearances of seminar members. The situation continues to be—as it has been for many decades—an ongoing debate between a naturalistic liberal persuasion that minimizes or eliminates the supernatural in the life and work of Jesus, and a more conservative and evangelical persuasion that is open to the category of transcendence in the life of Jesus—and finds substantial evidence of that fact in the Gospels.

### A JESUS FOR EVERY WHIM

The Jesus Seminar is the most celebrated offshoot of a spate of Jesus studies that have emerged in the past decade. That list includes Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's *Jesus: Miriam's Child and Sophia's Prophet*, a feminist, liberationist portrayal of a Jesus whose arch enemy

is "kyriarchy" and "malestream" theology. Another is Burton Mack's *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*, which casts Jesus as a Hellenistic sage. Mack regards the story of Jesus as told by the Gospel of Mark as a "sorry plot . . . a remarkably pitiful moment of early Christian condemnation of the world." Others include Barbara Thiering's *Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Unlocking the Secrets of His Life*, whose Jesus is the wicked priest of Qumran who eloped with Mary Magdalene, and who survived crucifixion by drinking snake poison; Marcus Borg's *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, whose Jesus is a shaman-like charismatic; John Dominic Crossan's *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, whose Jesus is a peasant Jewish cynic; and Morton Smith's *Jesus the Magician*, whose title says it all.

The number and tendencies of such studies leaves no doubt that a "new quest for the historical Jesus" is in full swing. There are, to be sure, others such as John Meier, Eduard Schweizer, Raymond Brown, and N. T. Wright who are producing careful and judicious studies that are exceptions to the above. Nevertheless, this new quest for Jesus

has taken up the mantle of the original quest of the nineteenth century, chronicled in Albert Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906), whose goal was to uncover the "real" Jesus beneath the layers of dogma and ritual that had accumulated over the centuries. That quest, as Schweitzer demonstrated, inevitably left us with a Jesus who looked suspiciously like a reflection of the questers themselves. The Jesus Seminar and Company provide media-grabbing examples of the degree to which contemporary liberal scholarship will go to make Jesus a Karaoke crooner of current trends and ideologies.

Like previous quests for the historical Jesus before it—and this is at least the third one if you're counting, including the so-called new quest in the 1960s by the students of Bultmann—this quest is dominated by the presuppositions and methods of naturalism. Admissible evidence is "from below" only, that is, what can be known about Jesus from history, literary sources, anthropology, and reason. Evidence "from above"—the faith claims of the Apostles' Creed, for instance—falls outside admissible evidence, unless such evidence can be ver-

ified apart from the authority of church, creed, and confession.

In other respects, however, today's quest parts company from the one Schweitzer so eloquently chronicled. The original quest was a nineteenth-century endeavor; today's is late twentieth century. The first quest was European and largely German; this quest is dominated by North Americans. The first was the product of liberal Protestantism; today's quest involves not only Protestants and Catholics, but also Jews, New Agers, and people of no religious commitment, including Marxists and atheists. Most important, the first quest was sparked by the scientific method whose hallmark was rationalism; this quest is the child of the social sciences and, particularly, the ideologies of liberation and cross-cultural anthropology.

#### A PEASANT PROTESTER

In broad strokes, who is the Jesus of this contemporary quest? This quest is primarily, if not exclusively, concerned with the social world of Jesus, and the social forces at work in it. The resultant picture is Jesus as a peasant Jew who, like Buddha or one of the Cynic philosophers, espoused a subversive view of traditional wisdom, and who both preached and practiced radical egalitarianism. He also gathered a group of followers and formed them into a movement (which was free from messianic or eschatological expectations). This Jesus had no messianic or divine self-concept, although most of these radical scholars grant that he performed at least some healings by inducing trancelike states because of the powers inherent in him as "a spirit-person."

This profile obviously omits a large body of the New Testament testimony to Jesus. Supernatural miracles are out, although Jesus is often granted certain psychic powers. Conspicuously absent is any sense of Jesus' self-consciousness as Messiah or Son of God, as One standing in a unique relationship to the Father endowed with authority to speak and act for God. Equally absent is any saving significance of his death. To be sure, Jesus was crucified as a suspected political subversive, but his death has no atoning significance. Nor is there a resurrection. The accounts of his resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God are said to be all the result of wishful thinking by the early church.

Crossan insists that Jesus' body was eaten by dogs—a conclusion for which there is not a letter of evidence in the New Testament or ancient Christian

literature! Once again, ideological presuppositions hardened into dogmatism succeed in overriding historical evidence, fulfilling Shakespeare's dictum that "thinking doth make it so."

#### A STRIPPED-DOWN JESUS

The social conditions of first-century Palestine are clearly an important source of knowledge for the life of Jesus. Several results of this sociological approach to Jesus either augment or reinforce our picture of the historical Jesus. The most important is that it anchors Jesus solidly to his Jewish context. Jesus was a first-century Jew—not a post-Enlightenment Aryan Gentile—and that cannot be forgotten or denied. He also was indebted to the Jewish Wisdom tradition and, as his parables reveal, was a chief exponent of it in Israel. Sociological investigation into the significance of synagogue life in Galilee, the role of women, Jewish family structures, rituals of purity and impurity, the taxation system, and the temple cult in Jerusalem provide new insights into the world in which Jesus lived. The sociological approach can yield important results in understanding why first-century Palestine reacted to Jesus and his message the way it did.

All these are positive gains of the new Jesus studies. Still, a social context is only a stage setting; it is not the plot of the play or the actors in it. To assume that a social context—even a correctly perceived one—captures the meaning of a person is like supposing that a résumé divulges the essence of an applicant. The chief problem of lives of Jesus exclusively "from below" is their inadequacy. C. S. Lewis observed that "a naturalist Christianity leaves out all that is specifically Christian," and this is a telling critique of this new quest. Each of the elements in its profile of Jesus—peasant Jew, movement founder, overcomer of social barriers, healer, ecstatic, and sage—is arguably a fair description of some aspect of Jesus. What is false is the attempt to package the list as the sum of the historical Jesus.

The chief flaw in this new quest is its lack of openness to, or even interest in, the possibility that Jesus was God incarnate, as the New Testament clearly indicates. The social world of Jesus, important as it is for raw data, cannot account for who he was. That Jesus was a peasant or teacher or movement founder is secondary to the core claims of the New Testament that he was the unique incarnation of God by whose life and death salvation is freely offered to the world. Every page of the New

Testament clamors for this deeper understanding. Every reconstruction of Jesus that denies this is a shadow, at best, of something more essential. The question the New Testament puts inescapably to readers is "Who do you say I am?" (Mark 8:29), not "What do you make of my social context?"

Finally, a purely social reconstruction of Jesus cannot account for the effect that Jesus has had on history. To assume that the earnest though bewildered Jesus of the Jesus Seminar and Company could have affected the course of human history as Jesus Christ really has is like stumbling upon a crater and supposing it the result of a cherry bomb.

#### CREATED IN WHOSE IMAGE?

The crucial error of these various critical quests of the historical Jesus is the assumption that the Jesus presented in the Gospels is essentially the fiction of the early church and is discontinuous with the historical Jesus. This is the flaw of discontinuity.

Modern scholarship has correctly shown that the Gospels are not strict biographies, but presentations of Jesus told from the standpoint of faith and for the purpose of furthering faith. The Gospels are part of the *kerygma*, the proclamation of the early church, which means that Jesus can be known only through the testimony of his followers. Liberal scholarship errs, however, in assuming that this testimony results in a distortion of the historical Jesus. Contrary to the assumption of discontinuity, the New Testament not infrequently testifies to the respect with which the Jesus tradition was held (1 Cor. 7:6, 12, 25). There is reason for confidence that the early church acted as custodian of the Jesus tradition rather than as corrupter of it. ✓

This quest of the historical Jesus has a head of steam that has been building for more than two centuries. In the history of the debate, four general positions have emerged. To illustrate them, imagine four pictures on a wall: the first is a photograph of Jesus, the second an accomplished portrait of Jesus, the third an abstract painting, and the fourth a mirror.

The first represents the literalist who believes the Gospels deliver an exact, photographic likeness of Jesus. The "portrait" represents a moderate critical scholarship that recognizes that the Gospels present various facets of Jesus, interpretations of Jesus from the perspective of faith that nevertheless stand in trustworthy continuity with the Jesus

of history. The "abstract painting" represents a radical critical approach that affirms that very little can be known about Jesus beyond the fact that he existed. The "mirror" in the fourth frame represents a subjectivist approach that regards the study of Jesus as essentially autobiographic: statements about Jesus are really statements about the people who make them.

The Jesus Seminar (and other studies mentioned) belongs to one of the last two frames. Either their critical theories permit only the barest evidence and result in very selective outlines of Jesus, or they fail altogether to find a historical figure and compensate by projecting a Jesus of their own values and ideologies.

The photographic likeness is not an appropriate analogy, either. God has chosen to give us four Gospels, not one, each of which presents a unique profile of Jesus. A careful reading reveals them to be portraits of Jesus, each defined by a special missionary purpose. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit, the material included in each has been chosen and shaped to serve the dominant theme. Matthew, for instance, writing from a Jewish Christian perspective, was compelled to demonstrate that Jesus was the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies of Israel. Luke, on the other hand, was writing more explicitly for the Gentile mission, and was compelled to demonstrate the universal lordship of Christ.

It is, of course, obvious to any sensible person that the same Jesus is the subject of all four of the Gospels, but the uniqueness of each of the four portraits makes it very difficult to produce from them a single harmonized life of Jesus. The photographic likeness is not dismissed out of irreverence or devaluation of the gospel record, but simply because it is inappropriate to what God has given us in the Gospels. The Gospels are not distortions of the historical Jesus, but faithful depictions of him.

The modern critical distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith is an essentially artificial and untenable distinction. In its endeavor to discern the historical Jesus, critical scholarship has exaggerated to an unwarranted degree the differences between the Jesus of history and the Jesus who is presented in the Gospels. The following four arguments provide convincing evidence for the historical reliability of the Gospels.

#### THE TITLES OF JESUS

The New Testament ascribes various titles to Jesus: Son of Man, Son of God,

Holy One, "I Am," Lord, Messiah (Christ), Prophet, and so on. Jesus used some of these titles of himself, whereas others were used only later by the church. The primary question, however, is whether any of these titles, especially the ones likening Jesus to God, represent Jesus' self-understanding.

Modern liberal scholarship operates on the assumption that messianic and divine status, especially as represented in titles, does not go back to the historical Jesus. The deity of Jesus is regarded as a later, secondary development that arose either as a result of the early church's encounter with Greek "divine men" and "sons of God" in the Gentile mission, or as a projection back onto the gospel accounts out of the early church's desire to endow the historical Jesus with an honor commensurate with his postresurrection lordship.

This hypothesis has been around a long time, and its longevity has imparted to it an air of facticity. As a hypothesis, however, it is not inherently convincing, and there is some very hard evidence against it.

The first evangelists to the Gentiles were, of course, Jewish Christians. The elevation of Jesus to divine status, and the projection onto him of sayings and titles in accord with that status, was surely no minor compromise to the monotheism of these Jews. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4) was the ace in the hand of Jews against Gentile polytheism. The hypothesis that Jewish Christians would be willing to surrender their trump card of monotheism in exchange for acceptance of the gospel by "Gentile sinners" (Gal. 2:15) and idolaters (Rom. 1:23), as Paul called them, is a very questionable hypothesis.

Think of it this way: Is the divine authority ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament more likely to be the result of the early church's desire to court the Gentile world (which it by and large disdained), or to be the result of its actual experience of Jesus—despite the problems that raised for its monotheism? The most satisfying answer is the latter. It is easier to start with the messianic self-consciousness of Jesus and explain the gospel accounts than it is to start with the assumption that Jesus was simply a Jewish teacher or charismatic healer, for example, and imagine how his followers came to regard him as divine—and fabricated the Gospels accordingly. Jesus' self-consciousness was transmitted by Jesus to his followers; it was not a product of the early church projected back onto the gospel

accounts of Jesus.

Indeed, the New Testament is reluctant to call Jesus "God," which is understandable given the influence of Jewish monotheism on its authors. But the New Testament ascribes divinelike titles to Jesus, such as Lord, "I Am," Son of God, and it comes perilously close to calling Jesus "God" (John 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13).

There is a tension in the New Testament, perhaps a conflict even, between Jewish monotheism and the person of Jesus, who consistently spoke and acted as God would. It is hard to imagine the early church knowingly creating such a tension by elevating Jesus to divine status—unless that status was inherent in who Jesus was. If Jesus was simply a first-century Jew about whom little is known and who was uncertain (if not confused) about his identity, why was he recast as the unique revealer of God (Matt. 11:25–30) whose death was the once-for-all remedy for sin (Rom. 3:21–26)? The tension is really only explainable as the result of the early church's confounding experience of Jesus, who appeared to be God in human form.

#### THE EARLY CHURCH: CREATOR OR CUSTODIAN?

A second assumption of liberal scholarship is that the early church had little or no interest in transmitting information about Jesus *per se*, but that it remembered and even invented Jesus material to reflect its needs and experiences. Suffice it to say that there are a number of "quality controls" in the New Testament that argue strongly against such fanciful inventiveness. The gospel writers did not wildly invent material about Jesus, but they were quite careful with the Jesus tradition. This is shown by the following:

- Many eyewitnesses of Jesus were still alive when the Gospels were written. These witnesses functioned as gatekeepers and custodians of "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). The wild inventiveness supposed by the radical critics is not found in the New Testament, but rather in certain second-century documents (e.g., the Infancy Narratives of Jesus, the Protoevangelium of James) that were produced later where Jesus traditions circulated in communities separated from the apostolic church.
- The rabbinic method of teaching by rote favored accurate and careful transmission of Jesus traditions as opposed to novel interpretation.
- The presence of embarrassing and even problematic material in the

Gospels (Mark 9:1; 14:71) speaks against the inventiveness of the early church, even when the church might have profited by it.

- The absence of parables in Acts and the Epistles (and other early Christian literature) is the strongest possible argument that the parables in the synoptic Gospels were not projected onto Jesus from the early church, but rather derived from Jesus.

- A comparison of the Epistles with the Gospels reveals that neither Paul's words nor those of other New Testament writers have been projected back onto the mouth of Jesus. No passage from Paul (or any of the other New Testament letters) can be found in the Gospels or on the lips of Jesus. No Pauline concept, such as the "body of Christ," "righteousness by faith," "under the law," or "flesh" is attributed to Jesus. This is a strong argument against the assertion that the Gospels are the early churches' stories projected onto Jesus: If the early church were avidly and indiscriminately putting words into the mouth of Jesus, we should expect to find at least some of the material from the Epistles in the Gospels or on the lips of Jesus. Since we do not, we ought to conclude that the gospel material is not extrapolated from the early church then and projected onto Jesus.

- Paul is careful to differentiate between instructions from the Lord and his own opinions (1 Cor. 7:10, 12, 25). Surely Paul was not an exception in this matter, but typical of the church as a whole. Paul could scarcely have won acceptance from the Twelve and the Jerusalem leaders had he been known to play loose with the Jesus tradition.

- In the New Testament itself we find that the transmitting of written sources is characterized by care and integrity. This is shown, for example, by the generally faithful handling of Markan material by Matthew and Luke. Is it not reasonable to assume the same care was taken in the transmitting of oral tradition? One characteristic of children, primitive peoples, and religious groups is that they do not like to see their traditions changed. The early church was certainly no exception to this rule.

- Finally, the supposed inventiveness of the early church meets a final stumbling block in the Gentile question. According to Acts and the Epistles, the preaching of the gospel to Gentiles and their admission into the church was the burning question of the early church. This issue, however, is virtually absent from the Gospels. Had



SCALA/ART RESOURCE, NY, PISANO, NICOLA, CHRIST JUDGING: DETAIL FROM THE LAST JUDGMENT, FROM PULFITT, DUOMO, SIENA, ITALY.

## The most reasonable answer to the question why the Gospels present Jesus as they do is because that is essentially who Jesus was.

the church actively engaged in framing "Jesus material" according to its needs and interests, surely it would have developed sayings on the Gentile question. The fact that such sayings are virtually absent in the Gospels argues in favor of the historical reliability of the material that is there.

### JESUS' SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

Liberal scholarship has generally regarded Jesus' elevated self-concept—his forgiving of sins, or presuming to speak and act with God's authority, for example—as unthinkable in first-century Jewish monotheism. Anything smacking of divine awareness could not have come from Jesus, it is asserted, but only from subsequent tradition ascribed to him by Hellenistic Christianity.

Recent comparative studies have largely dismantled this stereotype, however, and produced a fuller picture

of Jewish rabbis and sages. The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal that the founder of the Qumran sect, the Teacher of Righteousness, stood in a class by himself: "Through me Thou hast illumined the faces of the Congregation and hast shown Thine infinite power. For Thou hast given me knowledge through Thy marvelous mysteries" (1QH 7; G. Vermes translation).

Likewise, Rabbi Hillel, who died less than a decade before Jesus was crucified, said of himself: "If I am here, everything is here; if I am not here, what is here?" (*b. Sukk.* 53a). Moreover, Hillel often applied to himself biblical quotations that referred to God—much to the consternation of later rabbinic tradition.

These examples warn against categorically discounting sayings of preeminence attributed to Jesus. Jesus' self-consciousness, however, far surpassed

even that of the Teacher of Righteousness or Rabbi Hillel. A preeminent Jewish authority, David Flusser, notes "a great difference between Hillel and Jesus. Hillel's self-understanding was not limited to his own person, but was an archetype for each individual person. Jesus' understanding of his surpassing status . . . was linked to the knowledge that his person was not interchangeable with anyone else. He understood himself to be 'the Son,' and as such to have a central status and commission in the economy of God" (*Entdeckungen im Neuen Testament. Band I: Jesusworte und Ihre Überlieferung* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1987] 215 [my translation]).

Jesus' consciousness of standing in a unique and sovereign relationship with God is the key that makes the gospel accounts intelligible. Without this understanding, the Gospels are perplexing and problematic. It should not surprise us that Jesus never flatly stated that he was divine, for that would have signed his death warrant in a rigorously monotheistic environment. There are, however, many *implicit* clues to Jesus' consciousness of divine sonship and messianic authority in the Gospels. Consider three simple but important ones.

One is in the way he called his disciples. Jewish rabbis actually did not call disciples. Rabbis were rather chosen by disciples, much like a student today chooses a professor under whom to study. A rabbi, moreover, was important not in himself, but only as a vehicle of the commandments of God in Torah. Jesus, however, personally called his disciples, not to Torah, but to himself. Jewish rabbis assumed that gifted disciples might equal or surpass their understanding of Torah and eventually succeed them. Jesus' disciples, however, can never equal him, much less succeed him: "It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master" (Matt. 10:25). Nor is the number of disciples Jesus called inconsequential. The calling of 12 is a clue that in them Jesus presumes to reconstitute Israel! The undisguised prominence of Jesus in the call of the disciples leads to a single conclusion: their response to Jesus is their response to the kingdom of God itself.

A second clue to Jesus' divine self-consciousness is his use of *amen*. The Old Testament prophet prefaced his pronouncements with "Thus says the Lord" as a guarantee of Yahweh's authority. Jesus, however, assumes that authority himself, solemnly pronouncing, "Truly [*amen*] I say to you." *Amen*

was customarily used in Judaism as a concluding prayer response. Jesus, however, uses it as an introductory formula, and this is without parallel in the rest of the New Testament or in the whole of Jewish literature. Jesus' prominent and unusual use of *amen* clearly intends to attribute to his words divine authority and is a provocative clue that his pronouncements are the very pronouncements of God.

A third clue into Jesus' divine sonship comes from his calling God *abba*. Evidence from Jewish Palestine is extremely rare that *abba*, an intimate and endearing address for "father," was used of God. Jesus, however, habitually addressed God as *abba* (Mark 14:36), and his confidence of standing in a unique and filial relationship with God dominates his ministry from baptism to crucifixion. Jesus' understanding of his singular placement and empowerment by God is the unique source of his authority to speak and act on behalf of God. The inescapable conclusion of these and many other implicit clues of Jesus' self-understanding in the Gospels is simply this: In his self-presentation, words, and acts, Jesus presumes to be God's "stand-in"!

#### JESUS' EXECUTION

The most uncontested fact of Jesus' life is that he was crucified. The impression left by the Gospels is that the Jerusalem religious leaders instigated a procedure against Jesus that the Roman authorities affirmed, and that was finally executed by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. It is worth considering, however, exactly why Jesus was crucified.

Jews, after all, did not normally go around killing people, even over theological disagreements. The Mishnah, an 800-page Jewish sequel to Torah that spans the time from roughly the birth of Jesus until A.D. 200, preserves thousands of differences of opinions among rabbis without one of them leading to a plot of death and execution. The fate of Jesus, in other words, was categorically different from that of other Jewish rabbis. A "designer" Jesus who champions our causes and espouses our ideologies would have scarcely gotten himself crucified.

There was, however, one ground for which Jews did impose the death sentence, and that would account for Jesus' execution: the charge of blasphemy. This, of course, is the very charge that the earliest Gospel preserves, after Jesus affirmed that he was the Son of God who would come on the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:61-64).


All the gospel accounts agree that Jesus threatened the Jerusalem authori-

ties the most with his attack on the temple institution. What might have caused Jesus to presume to challenge the most sacred site of Judaism? Mark 11 clearly indicates that Jesus understood his person to supersede the temple itself, and that makes sense only if Jesus understood himself to be divinely appointed and empowered. The Jerusalem authorities, of course, took both the deed and the word justifying it as a blasphemous presumption on Jesus' part, justly punishable by death. But the charge of blasphemy remains an unmistakable testimony—even if from his opponents—revealing Jesus' true mission and purpose.

#### A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Statistics can prove anything—and so can critical theories about the Bible, depending on the disposition of scholars who use them. The higher critical method is a double-edged sword that can either discredit or validate the gospel record. Some of the very theories and methods employed by the Jesus Seminar to undermine the New Testament portrait of Jesus actually underscore the veracity of the account when reasonably applied.

We may affirm with confidence that the Gospels preserve a diverse and significant body of evidence of the actual truth about Jesus. Nowhere is the continuity between the memory of the early church and the self-understanding of Jesus more discernible than in the many witnesses to Jesus' bearing, his consciousness of standing in an absolutely unique relationship to God as his Father, and his authority to speak and act on behalf of God. Martin Hengel, the eminent Christian historian, is correct in saying that "Jesus' claim to authority goes far beyond anything [from] the Old Testament and [from] the New Testament period. [Jesus] confounds every attempt to fit him into the categories suggested by the phenomenology or sociology of religion."

The most reasonable answer to the question why the Gospels present Jesus as they do is because that is essentially who Jesus was. The Gospels faithfully preserve the memory that he left on his followers, that he was divinely legitimated and empowered to be God's Son and Servant. 

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## WHO WAS JESUS?

(A Synopsis of Views from *Life Magazine*, Fall 1994)

I don't think we know who Jesus was. The Gospels, which were written for political purposes—to convert people—are after the fact. Fifty years at least. Mary? Well, obviously he had a mother, so it had to be somebody—her name doesn't matter. Then one Gospel writer says hbe was born in Nazareth, the other says Bethlehem. Joseph might have been a shoemaker, not a carpenter. Some traditions said Jesus had brothers, others said Joseph had no other children. What difference does it make? The Gospel writers were novelists . . . I realize much of what we know about Jesus is novelistic. But I act as if it isn't.

Peter A. Bien, Professor of English at Darmouth College, translator of Nikos Kazantzakis's *The Last Temptation of Christ*

Jesus, to succeed, *had* to choose martyrdom. He had been a failure in all sorts of human enterprises. One was to convert everybody to love, to turning the other cheek. He was an abysmal failure at that. He was also a failure in his more militant role—scourging the moneylenders, and so forth. He changed nothing. So, basically, the only power he had at the end was the power of abdication. It's very, very important that Jesus chooses to die. That he *wants* to die. He links with this universal process—pure spirit, God—rather than try to resist it or pretend it does not exist. By abdicating, he paradoxically achieves a most spectacular success of integration. By willing his own crucifixion, with Judas's help, he brings into the service of good the most horrendous of the devil's instruments, death itself. All who came after him would see what had happened, and would know what the lesson is.

Peter A. Bien

There was no such person in the history of the world as Jesus Christ. There was no historical, living breathing, sentient human being by that name. Ever. [The Bible] is a fictional, nonhistorical narrative. The myth is good for business.

Jon Murray, President of American Atheists

The Bible is the fundamental way to view him: There was a virgin birth. Jesus was born all-powerful. He was brought here to save him. He was God made flesh, God walking the earth. He was man and God.

Richard Miller, spokesperson for the Brethren in Christ World Missions

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a Unitarian, was a spiritualist, as Jesus was. Emerson believed that Jesus was one deeply in touch with what Emerson called the "over soul." He thought Jesus divine precisely to the extent that we are divine. The difference being: Jesus recognized it, and most of the rest of us don't.

F. Forrester Church, Unitarian minister, author of *God and Other Famous Liberals*

There was a great teacher, and gathered around him was a small group of faithful followers. They listened to his message and were transformed by it. But the message alienated the power structure of his time, which finally put him to death but did not succeed in eradicating his message, which is stronger now than ever. That description would apply equally to Jesus and Socrates. But nobody's ever built a cathedral in honor of Socrates. Socrates called upon people to think straight, but with Jesus there's more than just "teaching," there's a transcendent dimension, beyond the here and now, as a source of hope and meaning.

Jaroslav Pelikan, Professor of History at Yale University, author of *Jesus Through the Centuries*

Jesus was a subversive sage. His witticisms tended to undermine the everyday view of things. Jesus taught them: If someone sues you for your coat, give them your shirt as well. In a two-garment society, that would have been funny.

Robert Funk, founder of the Jesus Seminar, which examines the authenticity of the Gospels

I am inclined to the view that Jesus caught a glimpse of what the world is really like when you look at it with God's eyes. He endeavored to pass that glimpse along in short stories we call parables and in subversive proverbs we call aphorisms. But He did not spell out what He meant. My glimpse is informed by, but bypasses, the Jesus of the Gospels—the Christ superimposed by the evangelists on their own glimpse of the real Jesus. I am convinced that the New Testament conceals the real Jesus as frequently as it reveals Him.

Robert Funk, (in *Honest to Jesus*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1996)

Muslims see him as the greatest prophet before the prophet of Islam. He is the prophet of inward spiritual life.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University

Islam does not accept that he was crucified, died, then was resurrected. Islam believes he was taken to heaven without dying, without suffering the pain of death.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

I asked my class, "Who was Jesus?" Most said he was a religious figure. Some said philosopher, comparing him to Socrates. Then there was Jesus as political leader, with one student comparing him to Mao and Stalin.

Tyler Roberts, lecturer and head tutor of religion at Harvard University



He was a feminist. He cured ill women, allowed them to become people who related his truths, forgave a repentant prostitute, allowed her to touch him. Women gave their money to support him. Mary Magdalen was the first witness to the Resurrection—what's more important than that, in Christianity? She was apostle to the apostles, told by Christ to go to tell them he had risen. There should be a role for women to preach and teach today—a role too often denied.

Susan Haskins, author of *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*

It's in the scrolls if you really study the codes: It was not a resurrection. He was put on the cross. Those within his own party, trying to help him commit suicide, gave him poison—the sponge dipped in vinegar. He was unconscious but not dead. His side was pierced, blood came out. A dead body does not bleed, so his followers knew he was not dead. They put him in the cave. He lived until his seventies, and it was he—Jesus acting behind Paul—who led their party out of Judaism and to Rome. He married Mary Magdalen and had four children.

Barbara Thiering, Dead Sea Scrolls interpreter, author of *Jesus, the Apocalypse*

Christ is the way. These are his own words; so it certainly must be the truth. And the way is narrow. These are his own words; so it certainly must be the truth. Indeed, even if he had not said it, it would still be the truth.

Soren Kierkegaard, *For Self-Examination*



## *Just Who Was This Jesus?*

For S.G.F. Brandon, Jesus was a political revolutionary, for Hugh Schonfield a messianic schemer, for Morton Smith the founder of a secret society, for Geza Vermes a Galilean holy man, for Burton Mack a wandering Cynic preacher, for John Dominic Crosson a Mediterranean Jewish peasant, for Marcus Borg a countercultural charismatic trying to make the world a better place, for Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza a first-century feminist who called his disciples into an egalitarian community of equals, for Barbara Thiering a member of the Qumran community who married Mary Magdalene, had two sons and a daughter, divorced Mary, married someone else, and died in his sixties. For Bishop John Spoling Jesus was born of a woman who had been raped, and all the stuff about Jesus' resurrection in the Gospels is nothing but later Christian "midrash."

These Jesus-scholars have found a reflection of their own values and ideals in Jesus, painting his picture in accordance with their own character, or lack of it. Meanwhile, many believing Christians will respond to the plethora of exotic concoctions and novelistic fantasies about the historical Jesus much like Mary Magdalene lamented to the two angels at the tomb: "They have taken away my Lord,, and I do not know where they have laid him (John 20:13)."

However, if one is dissatisfied with this pseudo-scholarly charade, there are other voices worth lending your ear! For Simon Peter, Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16); for Thomas, Jesus is "my Lord and my God" (John 20:28); for John, he is "the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20); and for Paul he is "the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

# On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ

William D. Edwards, MD; Wesley J. Gabel, MDiv; Floyd E. Hosmer, MS, AMI

• Jesus of Nazareth underwent Jewish and Roman trials, was flogged, and was sentenced to death by crucifixion. The scourging produced deep stripelike lacerations and appreciable blood loss, and it probably set the stage for hypovolemic shock, as evidenced by the fact that Jesus was too weakened to carry the crossbar (patibulum) to Golgotha. At the site of crucifixion, his wrists were nailed to the patibulum and, after the patibulum was lifted onto the upright post (stipes), his feet were nailed to the stipes. The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion was an interference with normal respirations. Accordingly, death resulted primarily from hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. Jesus' death was ensured by the thrust of a soldier's spear into his side. Modern medical interpretation of the historical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead when taken down from the cross.

(JAMA 1986;255:1455-1463)

THE LIFE and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth have formed the basis for a major world religion (Christianity), have appreciably influenced the course of human history, and, by virtue of a compassionate attitude toward the sick, also have contributed to the development of modern medicine. The eminence of Jesus as a historical figure and the suffering and controversy associated with his death have stimulated us to investigate, in an interdisciplinary manner, the circumstances surrounding his crucifixion. Accordingly, it is our intent to present not a theological treatise but rather a medically and historically accurate account of the physical death of the one called Jesus Christ.

## SOURCES

The source material concerning Christ's death comprises a body of literature and not a physical body or its skeletal remains. Accordingly, the

credibility of any discussion of Jesus' death will be determined primarily by the credibility of one's sources. For this review, the source material includes the writings of ancient Christian and non-Christian authors, the writings of modern authors, and the Shroud of Turin.<sup>1-6</sup> Using the legal-historical method of scientific investigation,<sup>7</sup> scholars have established the reliability and accuracy of the ancient manuscripts.<sup>24,27,29,31</sup>

The most extensive and detailed descriptions of the life and death of Jesus are to be found in the New Testament gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.<sup>1</sup> The other 23 books of the New Testament support but do not expand on the details recorded in the gospels. Contemporary Christian, Jewish, and Roman authors provide additional insight concerning the first-century Jewish and Roman legal systems and the details of scourging and crucifixion.<sup>2</sup> Seneca, Livy, Plutarch, and others refer to crucifixion practices in their works.<sup>3,28</sup> Specifically, Jesus (or his crucifixion) is mentioned by the Roman historians Cornelius Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, and Suetonius, by non-Roman historians Thallus and Phlegon, by the satirist Lucian of Samosata, by the Jewish

Talmud, and by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, although the authenticity of portions of the latter is problematic.<sup>24</sup>

The Shroud of Turin is considered by many to represent the actual burial cloth of Jesus,<sup>22</sup> and several publications concerning the medical aspects of his death draw conclusions from this assumption.<sup>34</sup> The Shroud of Turin and recent archaeological findings provide valuable information concerning Roman crucifixion practices.<sup>22-24</sup> The interpretations of modern writers, based on a knowledge of science and medicine not available in the first century, may offer additional insight concerning the possible mechanisms of Jesus' death.<sup>24,27</sup>

When taken in concert, certain facts—the extensive and early testimony of both Christian proponents and opponents, and their universal acceptance of Jesus as a true historical figure; the ethic of the gospel writers, and the shortness of the time interval between the events and the extant manuscripts; and the confirmation of the gospel accounts by historians and archaeological findings<sup>24,27</sup>—ensure a reliable testimony from which a modern medical interpretation of Jesus' death may be made.

## GETHSEMANE

After Jesus and his disciples had observed the Passover meal in an upper room in a home in southwest Jerusalem, they traveled to the Mount of Olives, northeast of the city (Fig 1). (Owing to various adjustments in the calendar, the years of Jesus' birth and death remain controversial.<sup>27</sup> However, it is likely that Jesus was born in either 4 or 6 BC and died in 30 AD.<sup>11,27</sup> During the Passover observance in 30 AD, the Last Supper would have been observed on Thursday,

From the Departments of Pathology (Dr Edwards) and Medical Graphics (Mr Hosmer), Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn; and the Homestead United Methodist Church, Rochester, Minn, and the West Bethel United Methodist Church, Bethel, Minn (Pastor Gabel).

Reprint requests to Department of Pathology, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905 (Dr Edwards).

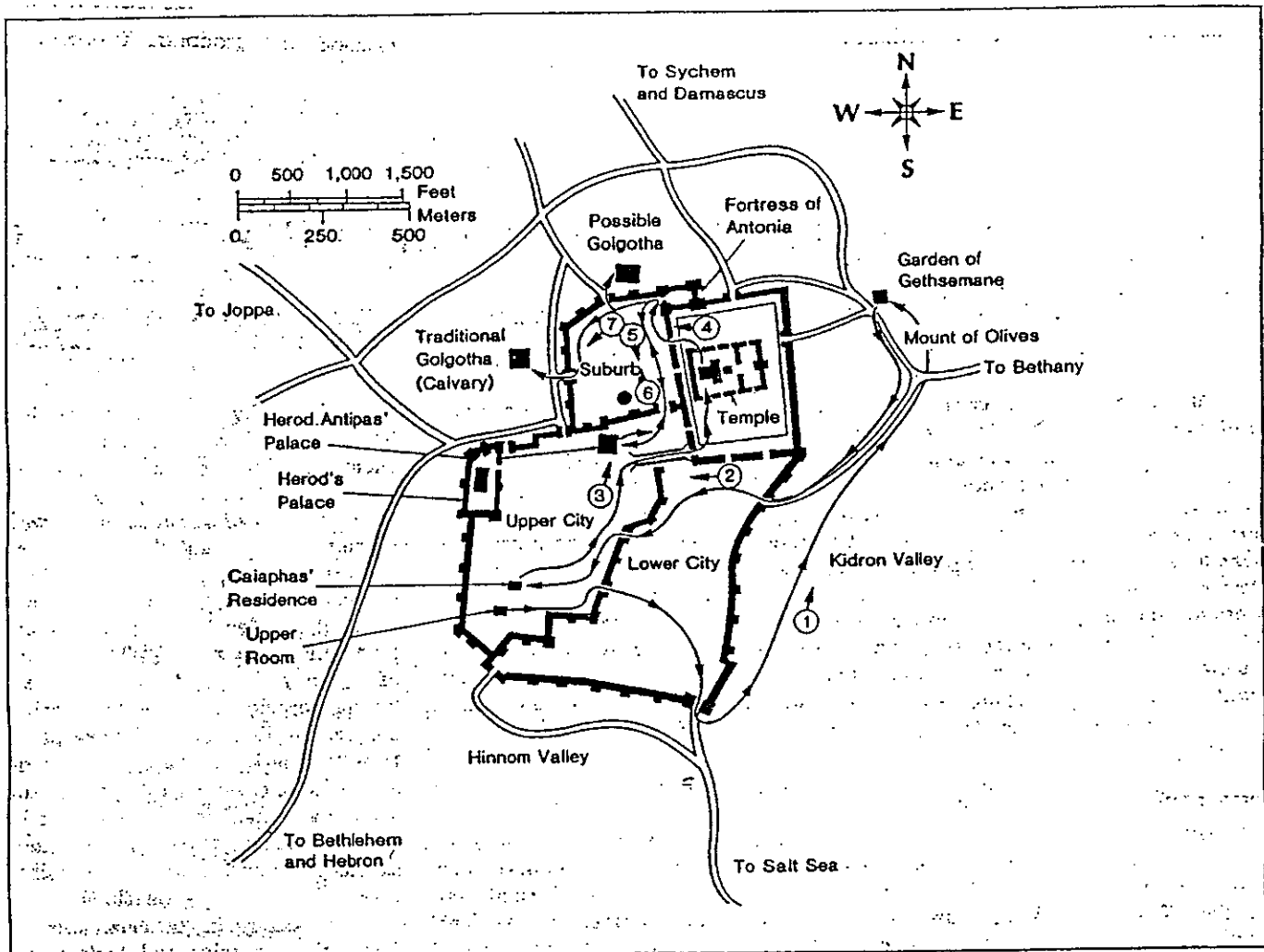


Fig. 1.—Map of Jerusalem at time of Christ. Jesus left Upper Room and walked with disciples to Mount of Olives and Garden of Gethsemane (1), where he was arrested and taken first to Annas and then to Caiaphas (2). After first trial before political Sanhedrin at Caiaphas' residence, Jesus was tried again before religious Sanhedrin, probably at Temple (3). Next, he was taken to Pontius Pilate (4), who sent him to Herod Antipas (5). Herod returned Jesus to Pilate (6), and Pilate finally handed over Jesus for scourging at Fortress of Antonia and for crucifixion at Golgotha (7). (Modified from Pfeiffer et al.<sup>20</sup>)

April 6 [Nisan 13], and Jesus would have been crucified on Friday, April 7 [Nisan 14].<sup>20</sup>) At nearby Gethsemane, Jesus, apparently knowing that the time of his death was near, suffered great mental anguish, and, as described by the physician Luke, his sweat became like blood.<sup>21</sup>

Although this is a very rare phenomenon, bloody sweat (hematidrosis or hemohidrosis) may occur in highly emotional states or in persons with bleeding disorders.<sup>22-24</sup> As a result of hemorrhage into the sweat glands, the skin becomes fragile and tender.<sup>24</sup> Luke's description supports the diagnosis of hematidrosis rather than eccrine chromidrosis (brown or yellow-green sweat) or stigmatization (blood oozing from the palms or elsewhere).<sup>24</sup> Although some authors

have suggested that hematidrosis produced hypovolemia, we agree with Bucklin<sup>25</sup> that Jesus' actual blood loss probably was minimal. However, in the cold night air, it may have produced chills.

#### TRIALS

##### Jewish Trials

Soon after midnight, Jesus was arrested at Gethsemane by the temple officials and was taken first to Annas and then to Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest for that year (Fig 1).<sup>1</sup> Between 1 AM and daybreak, Jesus was tried before Caiaphas and the political Sanhedrin and was found guilty of blasphemy.<sup>1</sup> The guards then blindfolded Jesus, spat on him, and struck him in the face with their fists.<sup>1</sup> Soon after daybreak, presum-

ably at the temple (Fig 1), Jesus was tried before the religious Sanhedrin (with the Pharisees and the Sadducees) and again was found guilty of blasphemy, a crime punishable by death.<sup>1,4</sup>

##### Roman Trials

Since permission for an execution had to come from the governing Romans,<sup>1</sup> Jesus was taken early in the morning by the temple officials to the Praetorium of the Fortress of Antonia, the residence and governmental seat of Pontius Pilate, the procurator of Judea (Fig 1). However, Jesus was presented to Pilate not as a blasphemer but rather as a self-appointed king who would undermine the Roman authority.<sup>1</sup> Pilate made no charges against Jesus and sent him to

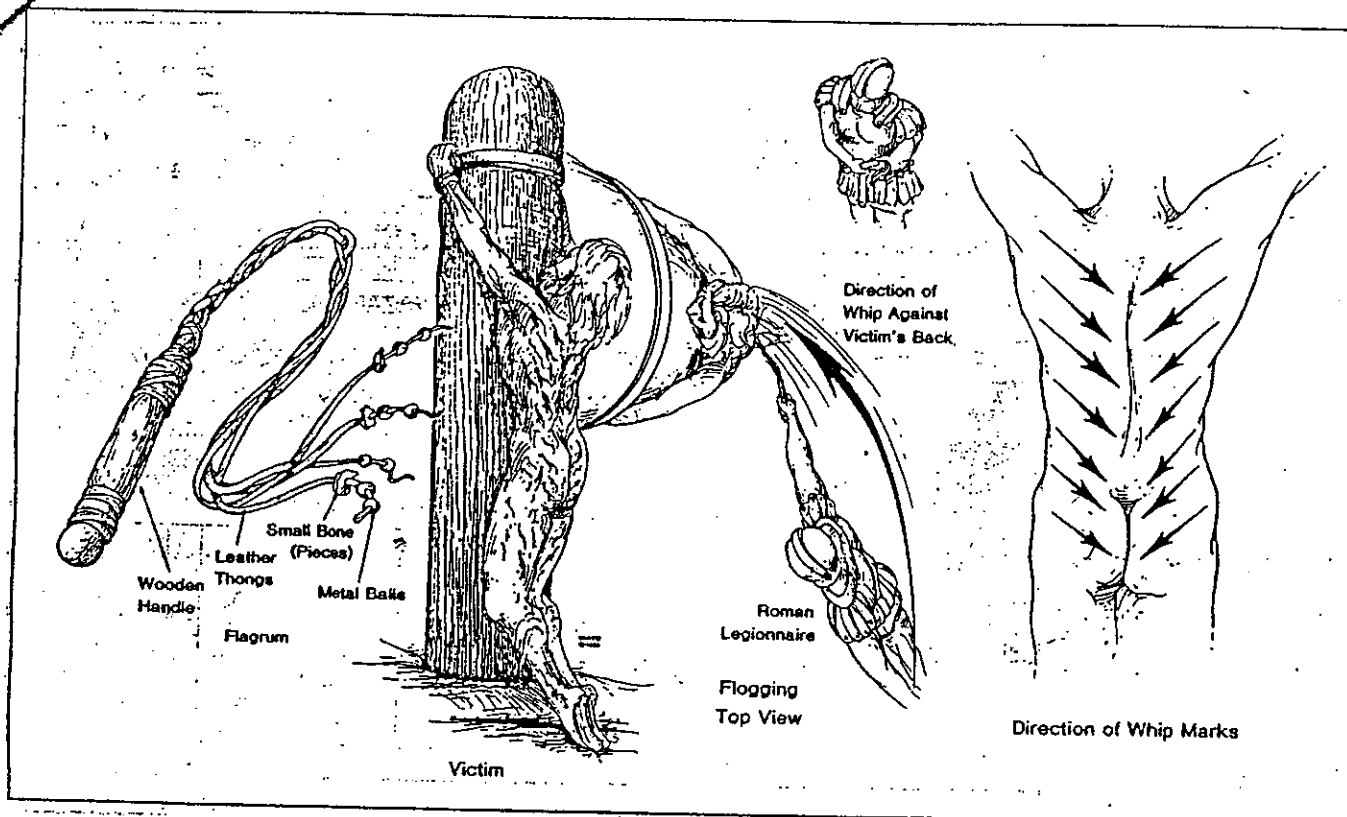


Fig 2.—Scourging. Left, Short whip (flagrum) with lead balls and sheep bones tied into leather thongs. Center left, Naked victim tied to flogging post. Deep stripelike lacerations were usually associated with considerable blood loss. Center right, View from above, showing position of lictors. Right, Inferomedial direction of wounds.

Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Judea.<sup>1</sup> Herod likewise made no official charges and then returned Jesus to Pilate (Fig 1).<sup>1</sup> Again, Pilate could find no basis for a legal charge against Jesus, but the people persistently demanded crucifixion. Pilate finally granted their demand and handed over Jesus to be flogged (scourged) and crucified. (McDowell<sup>2</sup> has reviewed the prevailing political, religious, and economic climates in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' death, and Bucklin<sup>3</sup> has described the various illegalities of the Jewish and Roman trials.)

#### Health of Jesus

The rigors of Jesus' ministry (that is, traveling by foot throughout Palestine) would have precluded any major physical illness or a weak general constitution. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that Jesus was in good physical condition before his walk to Gethsemane. However, during the 12 hours between 9 PM Thursday and 9 AM Friday, he had suffered great emotional stress (as evidenced by hematomas), abandonment by

his closest friends (the disciples), and a physical beating (after the first Jewish trial). Also, in the setting of a traumatic and sleepless night, he had been forced to walk more than 2.5 miles (4.0 km) to and from the sites of the various trials (Fig 1). These physical and emotional factors may have rendered Jesus particularly vulnerable to the adverse hemodynamic effects of the scourging.

#### SCOURGING

##### Scourging Practices

Flogging was a legal preliminary to every Roman execution,<sup>4</sup> and only women (except in cases of desertion) were exempt.<sup>5</sup> The usual instrument was a short whip (flagrum or flagellum) with several single or braided leather thongs of variable lengths, in which small iron balls or sharp pieces of sheep bones were tied at intervals (Fig 2).<sup>6,7</sup> Occasionally, staves also were used.<sup>8,9</sup> For scourging, the man was stripped of his clothing, and his hands were tied to an upright post (Fig 2).<sup>10</sup> The back, buttocks, and legs were flogged either by two soldiers

(lictors) or by one who alternated positions.<sup>11,12</sup> The severity of the scourging depended on the disposition of the lictors and was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse or death.<sup>13</sup> After the scourging, the soldiers often taunted their victim.<sup>14</sup>

#### Medical Aspects of Scourging

As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim's back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues.<sup>15</sup> Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh.<sup>16,17</sup> Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock.<sup>18</sup> The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive on the cross.<sup>19</sup>

#### Scourging of Jesus

At the Praetorium, Jesus was severely whipped. (Although the severity of the scourging is not dis-

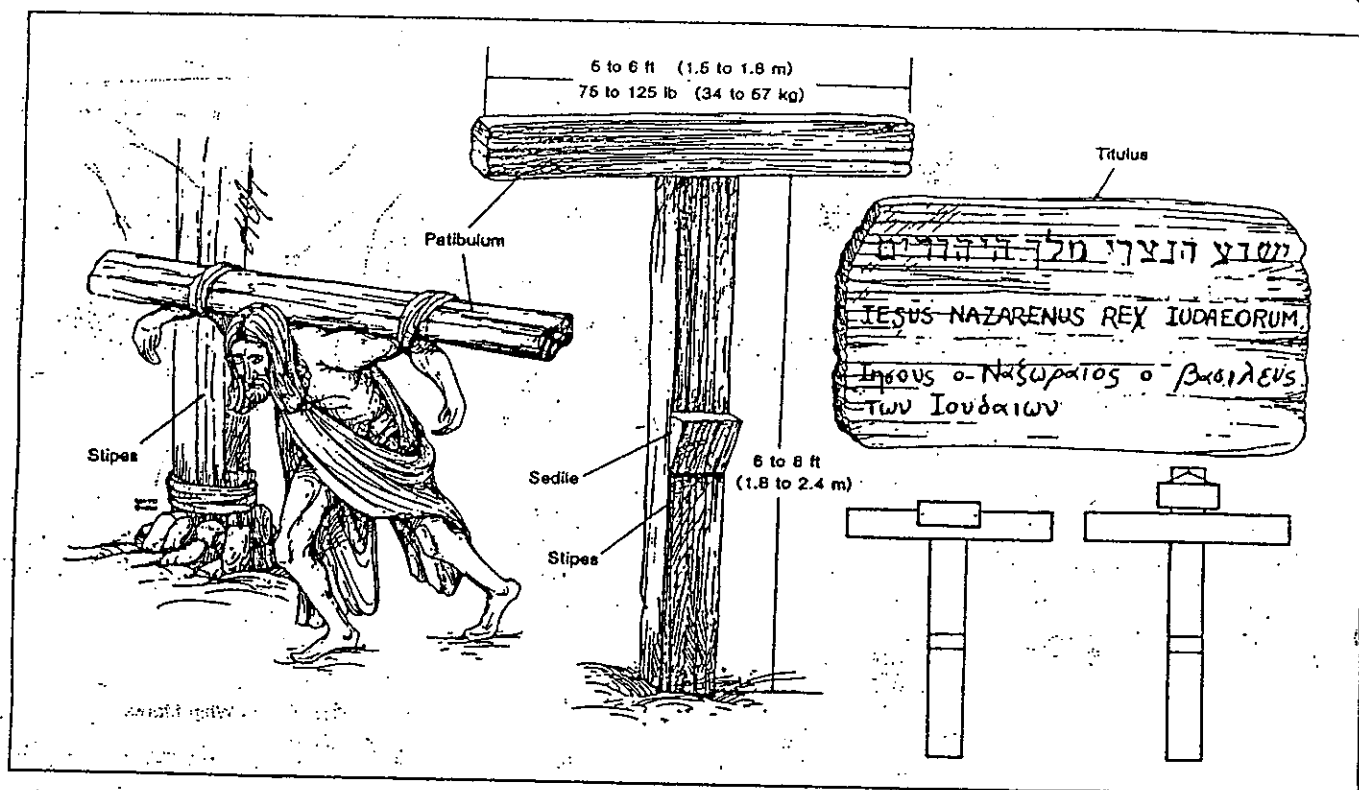


Fig 3.—Cross and titulus. Left, Victim carrying crossbar (patibulum) to site of upright post (stipes). Center, Low Tau cross (crux commissa), commonly used by Romans at time of Christ. Upper right, Rendition of Jesus' titulus, with name and crime—Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews—written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. Lower right, Possible methods for attaching titulus to Tau cross (left) and Latin cross (right).

Variations in Crosses Used for Crucifixion	
Designation	Characteristics
Infelix signum	Tree
Crux simplex	Upright post
Crux acuta	Pointed cross
Crux composita	Stipes and patibulum
Crux humilis	Low cross
Crux sublimis	High cross
Crux commissa	T-shaped (Tau) cross
Crux immissa	I-shaped (Latin) cross
Crux capitata	I-shaped (Latin) cross with a crossbar at the top
Crux decussata	X-shaped cross

cussed in the four gospel accounts, it is implied in one of the epistles [1 Peter 2:24]. A detailed word study of the ancient Greek text for this verse indicates that the scourging of Jesus was particularly harsh.<sup>21</sup> It is not known whether the number of lashes was limited to 39, in accordance with Jewish law.<sup>22</sup> The Roman soldiers, amused that this weakened man had claimed to be a king, began to mock him by placing a robe on his shoulders, a crown of thorns on his head, and a wooden staff as a scepter in his right hand.<sup>23</sup> Next, they spat on Jesus

and struck him on the head with the wooden staff.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, when the soldiers tore the robe from Jesus' back, they probably reopened the scourging wounds.<sup>25</sup>

The severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a preshock state. Moreover, hematuria had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus' physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical.

#### CRUCIFIXION Crucifixion Practices

Crucifixion probably first began among the Persians.<sup>26</sup> Alexander the Great introduced the practice to Egypt and Carthage, and the Romans appear to have learned of it from the Carthaginians.<sup>27</sup> Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maxi-

mum pain and suffering.<sup>28,29</sup> It was one of the most disgraceful and cruel methods of execution and usually was reserved only for slaves, foreigners, revolutionaries, and the vilest of criminals.<sup>30,31</sup> Roman law usually protected Roman citizens from crucifixion,<sup>32</sup> except perhaps in the case of desertion by soldiers.

In its earliest form in Persia, the victim was either tied to a tree or was tied to or impaled on an upright post, usually to keep the guilty victim's feet from touching holy ground.<sup>33,34,35</sup> Only later was a true cross used; it was characterized by an upright post (stipes) and a horizontal crossbar (patibulum), and it had several variations (Table).<sup>36</sup> Although archaeological and historical evidence strongly indicates that the low Tau cross was preferred by the Romans in Palestine at the time of Christ (Fig 3),<sup>37,38</sup> crucifixion practices often varied in a given geographic region and in accordance with the imagination of the executioners, and the Latin cross and other forms also may have been used.<sup>39</sup>

It was customary for the condemned man to carry his own cross

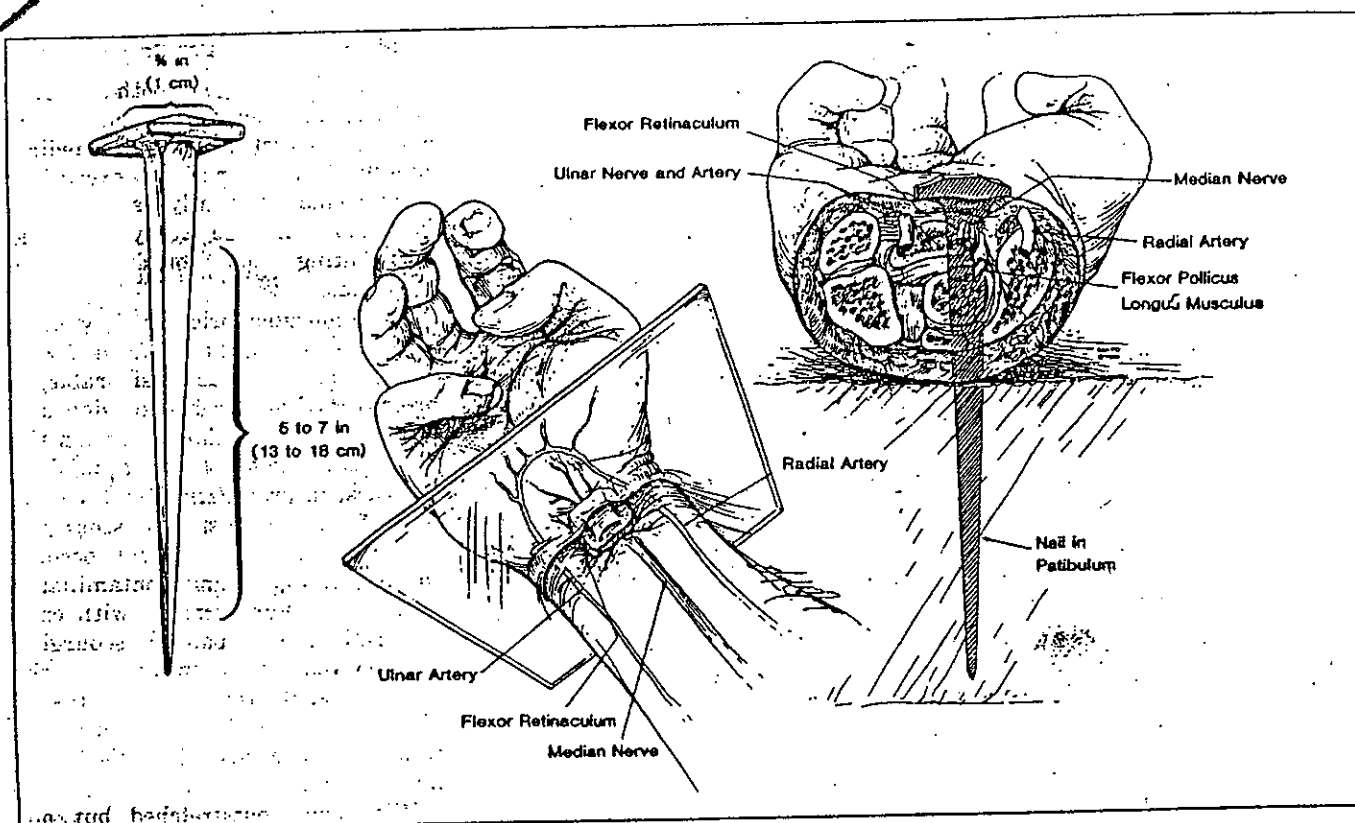


Fig 4.—Nailing of wrists. Left, Size of iron nail. Center, Location of nail in wrist, between carpals and radius. Right, Cross section of wrist, at level of plane indicated at left, showing path of nail, with probable transection of median nerve and impalement of flexor pollicis longus, but without injury to major arterial trunks and without fractures of bones.

from the flogging post to the site of crucifixion outside the city walls.<sup>11,12</sup> He was usually naked, unless this was prohibited by local customs.<sup>13</sup> Since the weight of the entire cross was probably well over 300 lb (136 kg), only the crossbar was carried (Fig 3).<sup>14</sup> The patibulum, weighing 75 to 125 lb (34 to 57 kg),<sup>15,16</sup> was placed across the nape of the victim's neck and balanced along both shoulders. Usually, the outstretched arms then were tied to the crossbar.<sup>17</sup> The procession to the site of crucifixion was led by a complete Roman military guard, headed by a centurion.<sup>18</sup> One of the soldiers carried a sign (titulus) on which the condemned man's name and crime were displayed (Fig 3).<sup>19</sup> Later, the titulus would be attached to the top of the cross.<sup>20</sup> The Roman guard would not leave the victim until they were sure of his death.<sup>21</sup>

Outside the city walls was permanently located the heavy upright wooden stipes, on which the patibulum would be secured. In the case of the Tau cross, this was accomplished by means of a mortise and tenon joint, with or without reinforcement

by ropes.<sup>10,11,20</sup> To prolong the crucifixion process, a horizontal wooden block or plank, serving as a crude seat (sedile or sedulum), often was attached midway down the stipes.<sup>11,16</sup> Only very rarely, and probably later than the time of Christ, was an additional block (suppedaneum) employed for transfixion of the feet.<sup>21</sup>

At the site of execution, by law, the victim was given a bitter drink of wine mixed with myrrh (gall) as a mild analgesic.<sup>17</sup> The criminal was then thrown to the ground on his back, with his arms outstretched along the patibulum.<sup>22</sup> The hands could be nailed or tied to the crossbar, but nailing apparently was preferred by the Romans.<sup>14</sup> The archaeological remains of a crucified body, found in an ossuary near Jerusalem and dating from the time of Christ, indicate that the nails were tapered iron spikes approximately 5 to 7 in (13 to 18 cm) long with a square shaft 3/8 in (1 cm) across.<sup>23,24,26</sup> Furthermore, ossuary findings and the Shroud of Turin have documented that the nails commonly were driven through the wrists rather than the palms (Fig 4).<sup>22,24,26</sup>

After both arms were fixed to the crossbar, the patibulum and the victim, together, were lifted onto the stipes.<sup>25</sup> On the low cross, four soldiers could accomplish this relatively easily. However, on the tall cross, the soldiers used either wooden forks or ladders.<sup>26</sup>

Next, the feet were fixed to the cross, either by nails or ropes. Ossuary findings and the Shroud of Turin suggest that nailing was the preferred Roman practice.<sup>22,24,26</sup> Although the feet could be fixed to the sides of the stipes or to a wooden footrest (suppedaneum), they usually were nailed directly to the front of the stipes (Fig 5).<sup>27</sup> To accomplish this, flexion of the knees may have been quite prominent, and the bent legs may have been rotated laterally (Fig 6).<sup>23,25,26</sup>

When the nailing was completed, the titulus was attached to the cross, by nails or cords, just above the victim's head.<sup>28</sup> The soldiers and the civilian crowd often taunted and jeered the condemned man, and the soldiers customarily divided up his clothes among themselves.<sup>11,29</sup> The

### Medical Aspects of Crucifixion

With a knowledge of both anatomy and ancient crucifixion practices, one may reconstruct the probable medical aspects of this form of slow execution. Each wound apparently was intended to produce intense agony, and the contributing causes of death were numerous.

The scourging prior to crucifixion served to weaken the condemned man and, if blood loss was considerable, to produce orthostatic hypotension and even hypovolemic shock.<sup>8,12</sup> When the victim was thrown to the ground on his back, in preparation for transfixion of the hands, his scourging wounds most likely would become torn open again and contaminated with dirt.<sup>2,16</sup> Furthermore, with each respiration, the painful scourging wounds would be scraped against the rough wood of the stipes.<sup>7</sup> As a result, blood loss from the back probably would continue throughout the crucifixion ordeal.

With arms outstretched but not taut, the wrists were nailed to the patibulum.<sup>7,11</sup> It has been shown that the ligaments and bones of the wrist can support the weight of a body hanging from them, but the palms cannot.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, the iron spikes probably were driven between the radius and the carpals or between the two rows of carpal bones,<sup>2,10,11,30</sup> either proximal to or through the strong bandlike flexor retinaculum and the various intercarpal ligaments (Fig 4). Although a nail in either location in the wrist might pass between the bony elements and thereby produce no fractures, the likelihood of painful periosteal injury would seem great. Furthermore, the driven nail would crush or sever the rather large sensorimotor median nerve (Fig 4).<sup>2,7,11</sup> The stimulated nerve would produce excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms.<sup>7</sup> Although the severed median nerve would result in paralysis of a portion of the hand, ischemic contractions and impalement of various ligaments by the iron spike might produce a clawlike grasp.

Most commonly, the feet were fixed to the front of the stipes by means of an iron spike driven through the first or second intermetatarsal space, just distal to the tarsometatarsal joint.<sup>2,3,11,30</sup> It is likely that the deep peroneal nerve and branches of the

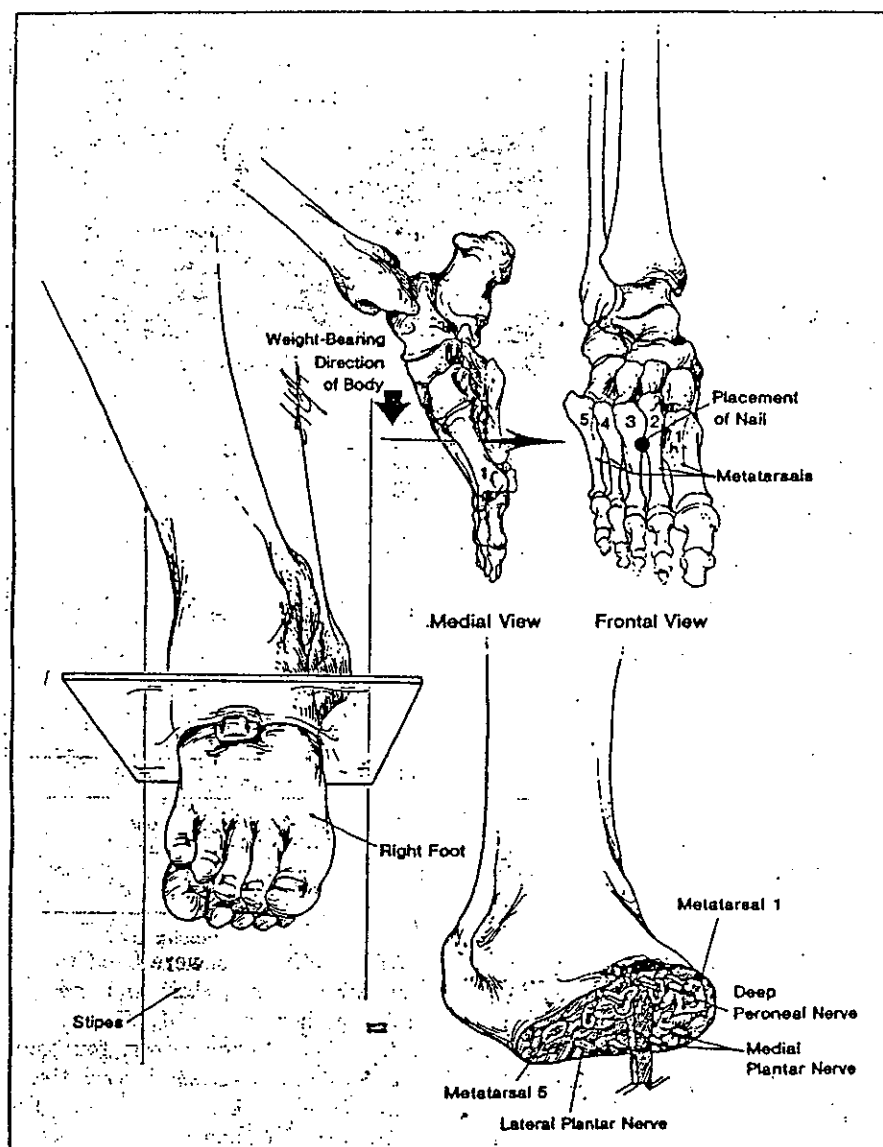


Fig 5.—Nailing of feet. Left, Position of feet atop one another and against stipes. Upper right, Location of nail in second intermetatarsal space. Lower right, Cross section of foot, at plane indicated at left, showing path of nail.

length of survival generally ranged from three or four hours to three or four days and appears to have been inversely related to the severity of the scourging.<sup>11,12</sup> However, even if the scourging had been relatively mild, the Roman soldiers could hasten death by breaking the legs below the knees (crurifragium or skelokopia).<sup>8,11</sup> Not uncommonly, insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying<sup>1</sup> and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals.<sup>8,11,12,28</sup> However, by Roman law, the family of the condemned could take the body

for burial, after obtaining permission from the Roman judge.<sup>11</sup>

Since no one was intended to survive crucifixion, the body was not released to the family until the soldiers were sure that the victim was dead. By custom, one of the Roman guards would pierce the body with a sword or lance.<sup>11</sup> Traditionally, this had been considered a spear wound to the heart through the right side of the chest—a fatal wound probably taught to most Roman soldiers.<sup>11</sup> The Shroud of Turin documents this form of injury.<sup>31,32</sup> Moreover, the standard infantry spear, which was 5 to 6 ft (1.5 to 1.8 m) long,<sup>33</sup> could easily have reached the chest of a man crucified on the customary low cross.<sup>11</sup>

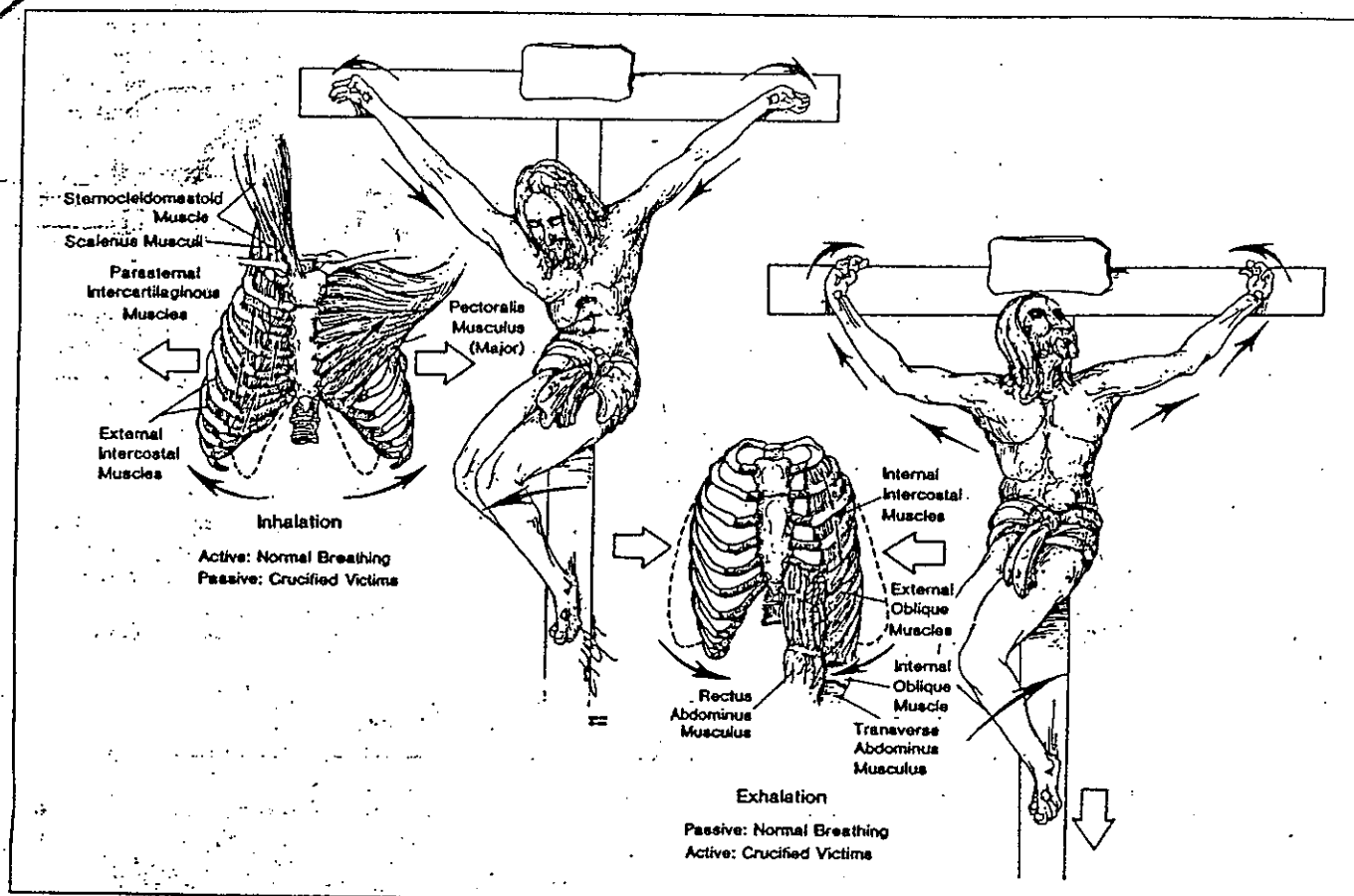


Fig 6.—Respirations during crucifixion. Left, Inhalation. With elbows extended and shoulders abducted, respiratory muscles of inhalation are passively stretched and thorax is expanded. Right, Exhalation. With elbows flexed and shoulders adducted and with weight of body on nailed feet, exhalation is accomplished as active, rather than passive, process. Breaking legs below knees would place burden of exhalation on shoulder and arm muscles alone and soon would result in exhaustion asphyxia.

medial and lateral plantar nerves would have been injured by the nails (Fig 5). Although scourging may have resulted in considerable blood loss, crucifixion per se was a relatively bloodless procedure, since no major arteries, other than perhaps the deep plantar arch, pass through the favored anatomic sites of transfixion.<sup>2,10,11</sup>

The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion, beyond the excruciating pain, was a marked interference with normal respiration, particularly exhalation (Fig 6). The weight of the body, pulling down on the outstretched arms and shoulders, would tend to fix the intercostal muscles in an inhalation state and thereby hinder passive exhalation.<sup>2,10,17</sup> Accordingly, exhalation was primarily diaphragmatic, and breathing was shallow. It is likely that this form of respiration would not suffice and that hypercarbia would soon result. The onset of muscle cramps or tetanic

contractions, due to fatigue and hypercarbia, would hinder respiration even further.<sup>11</sup>

Adequate exhalation required lifting the body by pushing up on the feet and by flexing the elbows and adducting the shoulders (Fig 6).<sup>7</sup> However, this maneuver would place the entire weight of the body on the tarsals and would produce searing pain.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, flexion of the elbows would cause rotation of the wrists about the iron nails and cause fiery pain along the damaged median nerves.<sup>7</sup> Lifting of the body would also painfully scrape the scourged back against the rough wooden stipes.<sup>27</sup> Muscle cramps and paresthesias of the outstretched and uplifted arms would add to the discomfort.<sup>7</sup> As a result, each respiratory effort would become agonizing and tiring and lead eventually to asphyxia.<sup>2,7,10</sup>

The actual cause of death by crucifixion was multifactorial and varied somewhat with each case, but the two

most prominent causes probably were hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia.<sup>2,7,10</sup> Other possible contributing factors included dehydration,<sup>7,16</sup> stress-induced arrhythmias,<sup>7</sup> and congestive heart failure with the rapid accumulation of pericardial and perhaps pleural effusions.<sup>2,7,11</sup> Crucifraction (breaking the legs below the knees), if performed, led to an asphyxic death within minutes.<sup>11</sup> Death by crucifixion was, in every sense of the word, excruciating (Latin, *excruciat*, or "out of the cross").

#### Crucifixion of Jesus

After the scourging and the mocking, at about 9 AM, the Roman soldiers put Jesus' clothes back on him and then led him and two thieves to be crucified.<sup>4</sup> Jesus apparently was so weakened by the severe flogging that he could not carry the patibulum from the Praetorium to the site of crucifixion one third of a mile (600 to



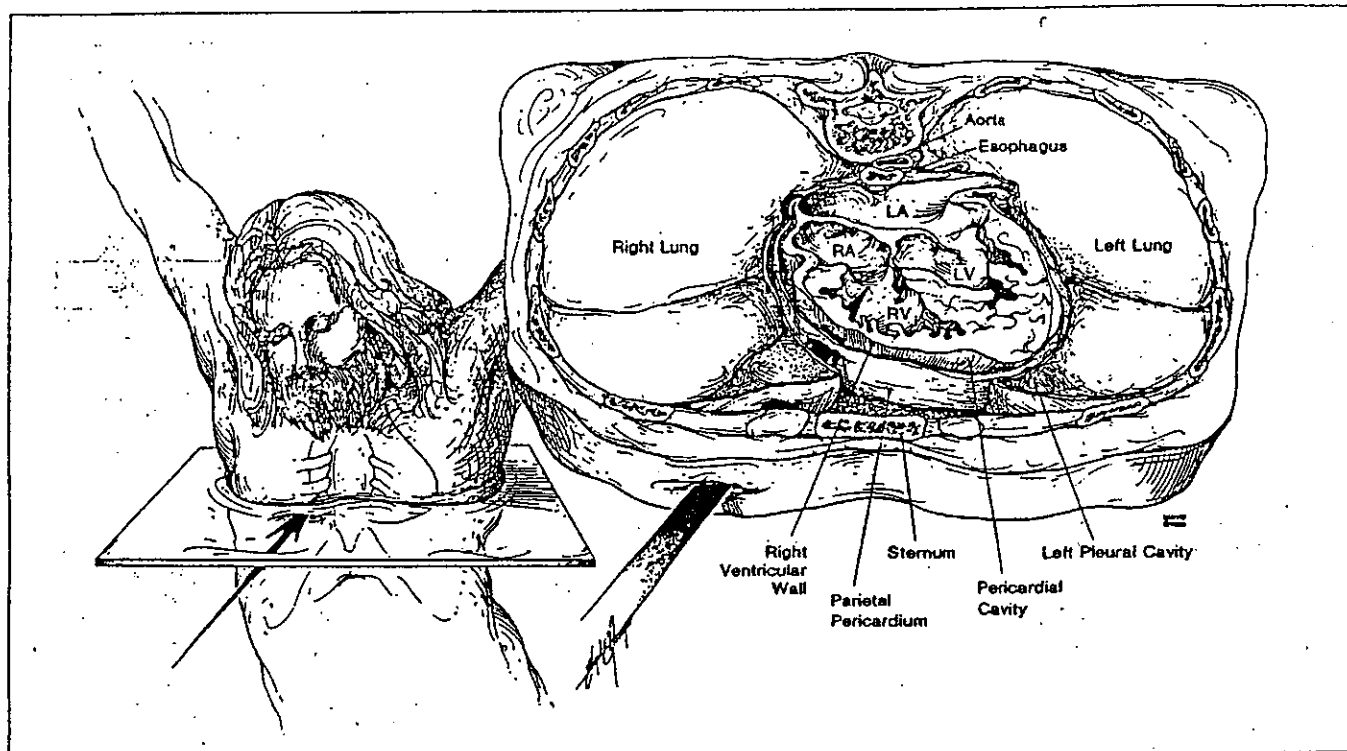


Fig 7.—Spear wound to chest. Left, Probable path of spear. Right, Cross section of thorax, at level of plane indicated at left, showing structures perforated by spear. LA indicates left atrium; LV, left ventricle; RA, right atrium; RV, right ventricle.

650 m) away.<sup>13,17</sup> Simon of Cyrene was summoned to carry Christ's cross, and the processional then made its way to Golgotha (or Calvary), an established crucifixion site.

Here, Jesus' clothes, except for a linen loincloth, again were removed, thereby probably reopening the scourging wounds. He then was offered a drink of wine mixed with myrrh (gall) but, after tasting it, refused the drink.<sup>1</sup> Finally, Jesus and the two thieves were crucified. Although scriptural references are made to nails in the hands,<sup>1</sup> these are not at odds with the archaeological evidence of wrist wounds, since the ancients customarily considered the wrist to be a part of the hand.<sup>141</sup> The titulus (Fig 3) was attached above Jesus' head. It is unclear whether Jesus was crucified on the Tau cross or the Latin cross; archaeological findings favor the former<sup>15</sup> and early tradition the latter.<sup>16</sup> The fact that Jesus later was offered a drink of wine vinegar from a sponge placed on the stalk of the hyssop plant (approximately 20 in, or 50 cm, long) strongly supports the belief that Jesus was crucified on the short cross.<sup>1</sup>

The soldiers and the civilian crowd

taunted Jesus throughout the crucifixion ordeal, and the soldiers cast lots for his clothing.<sup>1</sup> Christ spoke seven times from the cross.<sup>1</sup> Since speech occurs during exhalation, these short, terse utterances must have been particularly difficult and painful. At about 3 PM that Friday, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, bowed his head, and died.<sup>1</sup> The Roman soldiers and onlookers recognized his moment of death.<sup>1</sup>

Since the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the crosses after sunset, the beginning of the Sabbath, they asked Pontius Pilate to order crucifraction to hasten the deaths of the three crucified men.<sup>1</sup> The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves, but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.<sup>1</sup> Rather, one of the soldiers pierced his side, probably with an infantry spear, and produced a sudden flow of blood and water.<sup>1</sup> Later that day, Jesus' body was taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb.<sup>1</sup>

#### DEATH OF JESUS

Two aspects of Jesus' death have been the source of great controversy,

namely, the nature of the wound in his side<sup>14</sup> and the cause of his death after only several hours on the cross.<sup>13-17</sup>

The gospel of John describes the piercing of Jesus' side and emphasizes the sudden flow of blood and water.<sup>1</sup> Some authors have interpreted the flow of water to be ascites<sup>12</sup> or urine, from an abdominal midline perforation of the bladder.<sup>15</sup> However, the Greek word (πλευρά, or pleura)<sup>12,13,24</sup> used by John clearly denoted laterality and often implied the ribs.<sup>6,12,24</sup> Therefore, it seems probable that the wound was in the thorax and well away from the abdominal midline.

Although the side of the wound was not designated by John, it traditionally has been depicted on the right side.<sup>1</sup> Supporting this tradition is the fact that a large flow of blood would be more likely with a perforation of the distended and thin-walled right atrium or ventricle than the thick-walled and contracted left ventricle. Although the side of the wound may never be established with certainty, the right seems more probable than the left.

Some of the skepticism in accepting John's description has arisen from

the difficulty in explaining, with medical accuracy, the flow of both blood and water. Part of this difficulty has been based on the assumption that the blood appeared first, then the water. However, in the ancient Greek, the order of words generally denoted prominence and not necessarily a time sequence.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it seems likely that John was emphasizing the prominence of blood rather than its appearance preceding the water.

Therefore, the water probably represented serous pleural and pericardial fluid,<sup>2,3,4</sup> and would have preceded the flow of blood and been smaller in volume than the blood. Perhaps in the setting of hypovolemia and impending acute heart failure, pleural and pericardial effusions may have developed and would have added to the volume of apparent water.<sup>5</sup> The blood, in contrast, may have originated from the right atrium or the right ventricle (Fig 7) or perhaps from a hemopericardium.<sup>6,7</sup>

Jesus' death after only three to six hours on the cross surprised even Pontius Pilate.<sup>8</sup> The fact that Jesus

cried out in a loud voice and then bowed his head and died suggests the possibility of a catastrophic terminal event. One popular explanation has been that Jesus died of cardiac rupture. In the setting of the scourging and crucifixion, with associated hypovolemia, hypoxemia, and perhaps an altered coagulable state, friable non-infective thrombotic vegetations could have formed on the aortic or mitral valve. These then could have dislodged and embolized into the coronary circulation and thereby produced an acute transmural myocardial infarction. Thrombotic valvular vegetations have been reported to develop under analogous acute traumatic conditions.<sup>9</sup> Rupture of the left ventricular free wall may occur, though uncommonly, in the first few hours following infarction.<sup>10</sup>

However, another explanation may be more likely. Jesus' death may have been hastened simply by his state of exhaustion and by the severity of the scourging, with its resultant blood loss and preshock state.<sup>11</sup> The fact that he could not carry his patibulum

supports this interpretation. The actual cause of Jesus' death, like that of other crucified victims, may have been multifactorial and related primarily to hypovolemic shock, exhaustion asphyxia, and perhaps acute heart failure.<sup>12,13,14,15</sup> A fatal cardiac arrhythmia may have accounted for the apparent catastrophic terminal event.

Thus, it remains unsettled whether Jesus died of cardiac rupture or of cardiorespiratory failure. However, the important feature may be not how he died but rather whether he died. Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death (Fig 7). Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.

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## RELIGION

# AMA journal stirs fury with Crucifixion article

The venerable Journal of the American Medical Association hasn't made this many people fighting mad since it took a swipe at boxing a couple of years ago.



**LISA ELLIS**

After that encounter with fans known for near-fanatical fervor, the journal now is facing fallout from a venture into even more sacred territory: religion.

The angry letters from theologians, rabbis and preachers

as well as doctors have rained in since March 21, when the magazine published "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," a Holy Week offering that concluded, based on the Bible and other ancient documents, that Jesus died of hypervolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia.

The authors are Dr. William D. Edwards, a pathologist at the Mayo Clinic, and the Rev. Wesley J. Gabel, both of Rochester, Minn.

Accompanied by graphic drawings of flogging, nails driven through wrists and feet, spear wounds and the crucifixion process itself, the article describes in detail the blood loss, pain, severely impaired breathing and other effects that would have produced a slow and agonizing death.

But it was the article's religious premises, not its medical judgments, that infuriated the 17 correspondents whose letters were published in the May 23/30 issue.

"The intention throughout the article is to present an apology for the Christian faith, yet it masquerades as a scientific study, which you legitimate by printing it," said theologian Dennis E. Smith of Oklahoma State University, in a typical letter.

Whereas the article states that "scholars have established the reliability and accuracy of the ancient manuscripts" used in the Bible, most mainstream biblical scholars consider the New Testament "a set of theological documents that are not necessarily historical," wrote

"The fact is that the canonical Gospels do not agree in all details about the death of Jesus and furthermore reflect theological and literary reinterpretations and reworkings of the data," Smith added.

"There is a qualitative difference between scientific data and religious literature," wrote Rustin Berlow of New York. "We must not confuse one with the other. We cannot forget that in the same book, we read about Jesus walking on water, casting out demons and rising from the dead.

"These events are viewed as fact by many fundamentalist Christians, but whether scientific explanations need to be constructed based on them is questionable."

The Sisters and several other correspondents also accused the authors of reviving questionable ancient tales that implicate the Jews in Jesus' death.

"The Jewish people are held accountable for the death of Jesus no less than six times (in the article), with care to ensure that the Romans are given equal time and, in fact, special credit for administering the coup de grace," wrote Dr. Norman A. Marcus of Springfield,

Va.

"The juxtaposition of such assertions with anatomically accurate pictures of barbarism and torture ... is thinly veiled anti-Semitism at its worst," Marcus added.

In a reply published in the same issue as the letters, the authors and medical illustrator Floyd E. Hosmer "categorically deny anti-Semitic intent or inference."

They also deny any religious intent and defended the reliability of biblical evidence. "For most scholars, 90 percent of all variations in the New Testament documents have been resolved," the authors write. "A review of these factors gives the Gospel narratives unparalleled textual authority among ancient literature."

Meanwhile, Dr. George D. Lundberg, editor of the journal, said last week that he had no regrets about publishing the article because it initiated a series on torture in modern and ancient times.

He agreed that it is "arguable" whether the crucifixion of Jesus occurred in exactly the manner described in scripture. "But, as an example of how crucifixion happened for centuries, it's very valid, and I have no question about that."



"Sometimes Greg encounters more truth than he can handle."

## The Corrected Jesus

A Review Essay on the book

*The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*

(Edited by Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and The Jesus Seminar. Macmillan. 576 pp. \$30)

by Richard B. Hays

The message left on my answering machine by my brother-in-law, an attorney, sounded a tone of skeptical cross-examination: "I heard on my car radio today an interview with a New Testament scholar named Robert Funk. He's publishing a new version of the gospels that claims to distinguish what Jesus really said from what the gospel Writers reported. Funk says it's based on the work of a group of leading Bible scholars. Are you involved in this? How can they claim to know what Jesus really said or didn't say? I have enough trouble proving in a court of law what somebody said six months ago! Should I take this book seriously?"

### I

Indeed, a new book called *The Five Gospels*—the fruit of the labors of the much-publicized "Jesus Seminar"—claims to provide definitive new answers to the question, "What did Jesus really say?" A panel of New Testament scholars, meeting over a period of several years, has given us a new red-letter edition of the four canonical gospels plus the Gospel of Thomas, with the words adjudged by a poll of these scholars actually to have been spoken by Jesus printed in red type. Other colors reflect their shadings of judgment about the historical reliability of the other sayings attributed to Jesus: pink for possibly authentic, gray for probably inauthentic, and black for certainly inauthentic. The introduction to the book suggests breezily that an "unofficial but helpful interpretation of the colors" would be as follows:

Red: That's Jesus!

Pink: Sure sounds like Jesus.

Gray: Well, maybe.

Black: There's been some mistake.

The results are offered up in a fresh translation—dubbed the "Scholars Version"—that seeks to "produce in the American reader an experience comparable to that of the first readers" by approximating "the common street language of the original."

The grandiose dedication page of *The Five Gospels* invokes the names of three historical figures who hover as presiding genii over this ambitious work:

This report is dedicated to

GALILEO GALILEI

who altered our view of the heavens forever.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

who took scissors and paste to the gospels

DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS

who pioneered the quest of the historical Jesus

Unnamed, however, is the one figure who might most appropriately symbolize the public face of this project: P. T. Barnum. The co-chairmen of the Jesus Seminar, Robert Funk and John Dominic Crossan, have demonstrated an ingenuity for promotion that would surely have warmed the heart of that master American showman.

For the past seven years, the popular press has from time to time published eye-catching progress reports on the work of the Jesus Seminar under headlines such as "Most of Jesus' words ghostwritten," "Jesus probably didn't recite Lord's Prayer, scholars say," "Is the Bible the gospel truth?" and "Scholars compiling new Bible." And much humorous controversy has surrounded the Seminar's practice of voting on the authenticity of individual Jesus-sayings by casting colored balls into a box. The publication of *The Five Gospels* was heralded by a feature story on National Public Radio (the broadcast heard by my brother-in-law), and the charismatic Crossan has broken through to a mass audience by appearing on "The Larry King Show." Such publicity has been actively courted by members of the Seminar, who have from the beginning of their work explicitly aimed to disseminate their results as widely as possible in the public media.

Of course, the knack for attracting popular attention is not necessarily to be despised. If indeed there were significant new findings, broadly accepted by leading New Testament scholars, concerning the historical facts about what Jesus taught, such findings would indeed be newsworthy. The basic questions to be asked about this project, therefore, concern not the Seminar's voting procedures or means of communicating its findings but rather the substance of its claims. What methods have been used to produce the results here proffered? What image of the historical Jesus emerges from these multicolored pages? (Actually, the pages are mostly black: more on this below.) To what extent are these methods and results genuinely representative of informed scholarly consensus? For reasons that I shall summarize briefly here, I must conclude that the operative methodology of the Seminar is seriously flawed, that it therefore inevitably produces a skewed portrait of Jesus' teachings, and that—contrary to the impression fostered by the book—the findings reported here represent the idiosyncratic opinions of one particular faction of critical scholars.

The aims of the Jesus Seminar are generally consonant with the work of historical scholarship since the Enlightenment: the participants seek to reconstruct the history of earliest Christianity. This project entails a critical interrogation of the gospels as source documents, distinguishing, insofar as possible, the various streams of tradition and interpretation that underlie the canonical texts. The quest of "the historical Jesus"—as distinct from the Church's subsequent

representations of him—has engaged the efforts of New Testament scholars for the better part of two hundred years. Scholars have published hundreds of monographs on this subject, and every student who has taken a New Testament course in a college or seminary has been exposed to the complex problem of recovering a clear picture of the Jesus of history. Thus it is somewhat disingenuous for the editors of *The Five Gospels* to assert that the publication of this volume "represents a dramatic exit from windowless studies and the beginning of a new venture for gospel scholarship." The only new angle here is the decision to publish a complete edition of the gospels that seeks to represent schematically a scholarly consensus about the authenticity of each individual sentence attributed to Jesus. In theory, the project could produce an interesting freeze-frame shot of the status of gospel scholarship near the end of the twentieth century: not exactly the epoch-making scientific breakthrough of a Galileo, but a modestly worthwhile survey of opinion. The difficulty arises, however, in the execution of the plan. The participants in this poll were those who chose to take part over a span of eight years in a seminar sponsored, not by one of the major scholarly societies such as the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* or the *Society of Biblical Literature*, but by Funk's maverick entrepreneurial venture, the Westar Institute, located in Sonoma, California. This self-selected group, though it includes several fine scholars, does not represent a balanced cross-section of scholarly opinion. Furthermore, the criteria for judgment that are employed in *The Five Gospels* are highly questionable.

## II

For the sake of brevity, I shall note just four ways in which the methodology of the project is problematic.

First, there is the problem of the selection and dating of sources. The members of the Seminar determined—quite properly—that sayings attested in the earliest extant sources have the greatest claim to authenticity. But what are these earliest sources? The Jesus Seminar adopts the standard two-source theory as a solution to the synoptic problem: Mark is the earliest of the three synoptic gospels; in composing their gospels, Matthew and Luke used Mark along with a hypothetical common source Q (short for the German *Quelle*: "source"), consisting primarily of sayings of Jesus. One would think, then, that this analysis ought to put the two synoptic sources, Mark and Q, on roughly equal footing as sources for authentic Jesus material. However, the Jesus Seminar dates the Q material earlier than the traditions found in Mark, during the period 50-70 A.D. Mark, dated around 70 A.D., in fact fares poorly in the Seminar's judgment as a source for Jesus-sayings. Only one sentence in this entire gospel receives the red-letter treatment: "Pay the emperor what belongs to the emperor, and God what belongs to God" (Mark 12:17).

On the other hand, the extracanonical Gospel of Thomas is dated—for reasons never explained in the book—to the same early period as Q. This extraordinarily early dating of Thomas, along with the

judgment that it is literarily independent of the synoptic tradition, becomes a crucial factor in the Jesus Seminar's weighting of evidence:

The first written gospels were Sayings Gospel Q and possibly an early version of the Gospel of Thomas. The Gospel of Mark was not composed until about 70 A.D. For these reasons alone, it is understandable that double attestation in the early independent sources Thomas and Q constitutes strong *documentary* evidence [emphasis added].

This valuing of Thomas as an early and independent source is, however, a highly controversial claim. The traditional opinion among New Testament scholars has been that the Gospel of Thomas—a text known to us through a fourth-century Coptic text discovered at Nag Hammadi in Egypt—was composed in the second century perhaps containing some independent tradition but heavily shaped by Gnostic teachings. Many scholars regard it as literarily dependent on the canonical gospels, though this remains a debated issue. No hint of these debates, however, is allowed to appear in the pages of *The Five Gospels*, which unhesitatingly treats the hypothetical Q and a hypothetical "early version of Thomas" as the crucial sources for locating authentic Jesus tradition. Here some suspicion begins to arise concerning the candor of the editors of this book. They claim that they want to make the results of the best critical scholarship available to the public, but their working method trades upon a controversial and implausible early dating of Thomas, without offering the reader any clue that this is a shaky element in their methodological foundation.

The second major methodological issue is the Seminar's use of the criterion of dissimilarity for assessing the authenticity of Jesus tradition. This criterion posits that sayings material may be judged certainly authentic only when it is dissimilar both to antecedent Jewish tradition and to subsequent Christian tradition. Thus it is argued, for example, that Jesus probably did not say at his final meal with his disciples, "Have some, this is my body" [*sic*] (Mark 14:22). Why? Because the Church's liturgical tradition reports that he did; therefore, we cannot be sure that this saying was not read back into the story. On the other hand, Jesus almost certainly said, "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44a). Why? Because it allegedly "cuts against the social grain" of Judaism—and presumably it isn't anything the early Church would have invented, either.

The strict application of the criterion of dissimilarity has two immediately evident results. First, almost all the material in the Gospels is excluded as being either too Jewish or too Christian; this criterion is largely responsible for the fact that "82 percent of the words ascribed to Jesus in the gospels were not actually spoken by him, according to the Jesus Seminar." (If one counts the possibly authentic sayings printed in pink type, the percentage of inauthentic material is significantly reduced.) Indeed, one is

surprised that 18 percent remains untouched by this criterion, and one suspects that a more rigorous application could eliminate even more. For instance, the early Church did teach love of enemies in a way that reflects direct dependence upon the Old Testament rather than upon Jesus (cf. Romans 12:20-21, quoting Proverbs 25:21). Perhaps the Jesus Seminar was not sufficiently "critical" at this point. The second consequence is that the "Jesus" who emerges from this procedure is necessarily a free-floating iconoclast, artificially isolated from his people and their Scripture, and artificially isolated from the movement that he founded.

As Nils Dahl rightly observed more than forty years ago, the criterion of dissimilarity must be applied in order to identify "a critically assured minimum," which must then be supplemented by other criteria and evidence. Indeed, Jesus becomes comprehensible precisely as a historical figure only when he is placed in historical continuity with first-century Judaism and with emergent Christianity. As Dahl insisted,

In no case can any distinct separation be achieved between the genuine words of Jesus and the constructions of the community. We do not escape the fact that we know Jesus only as the disciples remembered him. Whoever thinks that the disciples completely misunderstood their Master or even consciously falsified his picture may give fantasy free reign.

The work of the Jesus Seminar exemplifies the fantasy that Dahl prophesied.

The third major methodological problem, closely related to the second, is the Jesus Seminar's tendentious insistence on finding a "non-eschatological Jesus." The members assert repeatedly that Jesus did not proclaim a message of God's future intervention in history and final judgment. Instead,

God was so real for him that he could not distinguish God's present activity from any future activity. He had a poetic sense of time in which the future and the present merged, simply melted together, in the intensity of his vision. But Jesus' uncommon views were obfuscated by the more pedestrian conceptions of John [the Baptist], on the one side, and by the equally pedestrian views of the early Christian community, on the other.

Jesus' "poetic sense of time" was lost on the disciples, however: "Jesus' followers did not grasp the subtleties of his position and reverted, once Jesus was not there to remind them, to the view they had learned from John the Baptist." Consequently according to the Seminar, nearly all the earliest Christian writings are infected by an eschatological perspective—including Q (thus the apocalyptic material in Q must be assigned to

"late Q"! ). But now, at last, the Jesus Seminar has come along to rescue "traces of that enigmatic sage from Nazareth—traces that cry out for recognition and liberation from the firm grip of those whose faith overpowered their memories."

This must be deemed a "methodological problem" because the Jesus Seminar employs its conviction that Jesus was a non-eschatological thinker as a stringent criterion for sorting the authenticity of the sayings material. Everything in the gospels that smacks of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology is firmly consigned to black type. A "cameo-essay" explains the reasons for this decision roughly as follows: the gospels contain sayings proclaiming God's rule as both present and future; Jesus could not have said both things; the future eschatology appears "bombastic and threatening"; therefore, Jesus must have spoken of God's rule only as present reality. This is confirmed by the fact that the major parables of Jesus "do not reflect an apocalyptic view of history." This bizarre claim can be supported only by screening the parables critically in such a way that their obviously apocalyptic elements are judged inauthentic. For example, one of the "major parables" said to illustrate Jesus' non-apocalyptic view of history is the parable of the corrupt judge (Luke 18:1-8). The Jesus Seminar deems vv. 2-5 to be possibly authentic (pink) but vv. 6-8 to be inauthentic (black). Why? Because the latter verses speak of God's eschatological vindication of his elect and of the future coming of the Son of Man; therefore, they must have been composed by Luke. The same sort of circular reasoning is applied to pericope after pericope in the gospels to exclude future eschatology from Jesus' teaching.

In contrast to this arbitrary procedure, consider the following statement of the mainstream critical consensus by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, a scholar who can hardly be accused of traditionalist bias: "Exegetes agree that it is the mark of Jesus" preaching and ministry that he proclaimed the *basileia* of God as future and present, eschatological vision and experiential reality." Characteristic of early Christian preaching is its *proleptic* eschatology, its conviction that God's coming kingdom has already begun to impinge upon the present in such a way that God's final justice is prefigured—but hardly fully realized—now. (For an elegant extended example, see Romans 8.) The gospel tradition offers us strong reasons to believe, as Schussler Fiorenza indicates, that a similar proleptic eschatology characterized Jesus' own proclamation. Only flat-footed rationalists could deem it impossible for both the present and future Kingdom sayings to be held in Jesus' mind at the same time.

Finally, the attempt to assess the authenticity of Jesus sayings in isolation from a more comprehensive reconstruction of the events of his life, ministry, and death is methodologically problematic. The Jesus constructed by the Jesus Seminar is a talking head whose teachings bear no intelligible relation to his death on a cross. If Jesus said only the sorts of things judged authentic by the Seminar, it is very difficult to see how he could have been mistaken by Jewish and Roman authorities as a messianic pretender who



needed to be executed. Again, Dahl made the point clearly:

One point in the life of Jesus is unconditionally established: his death. A historically tenable description of the life of Jesus would be possible only in the form of a description of his death, its historical presuppositions, and the events preceding and following it.

More recently, E.P. Sanders' important book *Jesus and Judaism* takes a methodological path similar to that which Dahl had recommended, building its account of Jesus upon the events and actions of Jesus' career that can be most securely ascertained, rather than upon the tradition of his sayings, insisting that "a good hypothesis about Jesus' intention and his relationship with his contemporaries ... should offer a connection between his activity and his death." The result is a Jesus whose central concern was the hope of God's eschatological restoration of Israel—a theme that is emphatically consigned to black type in *The Five Gospels*. Indeed, though *Jesus and Judaism* was published in the year that the Seminar began its work (1985), the Seminar inexplicably ignores Sanders' methods and conclusions.

By contrast, rather than setting the sayings in a narrative context of historical events, the Jesus Seminar sees them as fragmentary materials mediated by oral tradition that—by its account—retains only short, memorable aphorisms and parables, floating free from association with any particular historical event. Allegedly, then, we can recover an approximation of "what Jesus really said" by applying general laws of oral transmission to strip away accretions and modifications. One wonders whether the Seminar adopts too sanguine a view of its ability to work backwards from texts written down many years later to restore Jesus' pristine oral teachings.

In any case, the Seminar's concentration on Jesus' words as the primary evidence for historical knowledge about him is a late-blooming legacy of the otherwise defunct "New Quest of the Historical Jesus," a spinoff of Bultmannian existentialist theology that was briefly fashionable in the 1960s. The New Quest—some of whose original practitioners are among the members of the Jesus Seminar—sought to recover from Jesus' sayings and parables his "understanding of existence," detached from any particular claims about his life and actions. By drawing heavily upon the Gospel of Thomas and by packaging its results in a more user-friendly format than the abstruse hermeneutical musings of the "New Quest," the Seminar has updated this approach.

Whether it has thereby discovered anything that ought to be classified as historical knowledge is exceedingly doubtful. What the members of the Jesus Seminar have done, in effect, is merely to offer us an anthology of their favorite Jesus-sayings. In this respect, as in several others, they do indeed follow the spiritual and intellectual example of Thomas Jefferson, who—though he declared himself a "Materialist" in contrast to the "Spiritualism" of Jesus—undertook the

task of producing an expurgated edition of "The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth Extracted Textually from the Gospels":

Among the sayings and discourses imputed to Him by His biographers, I find many passages of fine imagination, correct morality, and of the most lovely benevolence; and others, again, of so much ignorance, so much absurdity, so much untruth, charlatanism, and imposture, as to pronounce it impossible that such contradictions should have proceeded from the same Being. I separate, therefore, the gold from the dross; restore to Him the former, and leave the latter to the stupidity of some, and roguery of others, of His disciples.

How did Jefferson distinguish between the sublime teachings of Jesus and the inventions of "the groveling authors" who wrote the gospels? "The difference is obvious to the eye and to the understanding," for the authentic words of Jesus stand out like "diamonds in a dunghill." For the Jesus Seminar, as for Jefferson, an a priori construal of Jesus and his message governs the critical judgment made about individual sayings. N.T. Wright accurately sizes up the Seminar's *modus operandi*:

What is afoot ... is not the detailed objective study of individual passages, leading up to a new view of Jesus and the early Church. It is a particular view of Jesus and the early Church, working its way through into a detailed list of sayings that fit with this view.

As Wright observes, this is not necessarily a bad thing: any attempt at reconstructing the historical Jesus must operate with some general hypotheses that can be tested against the evidence: nothing is gained by "pseudo-atomistic work on apparently isolated fragments." The difficulty with the work of the Jesus Seminar, however, even more than with Jefferson's scissors-and-paste job, is that so much of the evidence must be thrown away in order to save the hypothesis.

What portrait of Jesus emerges finally from the work of the Seminar? As we are repeatedly told, "He was a traveling sage who traded in wisdom." The description pegs him—as some of the Seminar members have argued in other publications—as an itinerant Cynic philosopher, rather than as a prophet or the leader of a religious reform movement. He was a "laconic sage" who never initiated debates or controversies: "He is passive until a question is put to him, or until he or his disciples are criticized." When he did speak, he spoke in parables and aphorisms, employing "exaggeration, humor, and paradox." He shocked his contemporaries by calling for a reversal of roles and overturning people's ordinary expectations. He never spoke about himself, however, or claimed to play any distinctive role in the consummation of God's

purposes. Certainly he never claimed to be the Messiah. Some of the elements of this portrait are, of course, familiar from the canonical portrayals. The distortion lies more in what is denied than in what is affirmed. The depiction of Jesus as a Cynic philosopher with no concern about Israel's destiny, no connection with the concerns and hopes that animated his Jewish contemporaries, no interest in the interpretation of Scripture, and no message of God's eschatological judgment is—quite simply—an ahistorical fiction, achieved by the surgical removal of Jesus from His Jewish context. The fabrication of a non-Jewish Jesus is one particularly pernicious side effect of the Jesus Seminar's methodology. One would have thought that the tragic events of our century might have warned us to be wary of biblical scholars who deny the Jewishness of Jesus.

### III

Who are the scholars that make up the membership of the Jesus Seminar? The group's publicity creates the impression that they represent a broad cross-section of this country's leading critical scholars. It is asserted that "the scholarship represented by the Fellows of the Jesus Seminar is the kind that has come to prevail in all the great universities of the world." Though the Seminar expects to encounter hostile criticism, its work is said to be under attack principally "by conservative Christian groups" and by "those who lack academic credentials." The casual reader of the introduction to *The Five Gospels* might suppose that no serious New Testament scholar would differ materially from the consensus represented by this book, were it not for the single telltale polemical reference to anonymous "elitist academic critics who deplored the public face of the seminar." In fact—let it be said clearly—most professional biblical scholars are profoundly skeptical of the methods and conclusions of this academic splinter group. The membership of the Jesus Seminar does not include the overwhelming majority of the New Testament scholars who teach at the major graduate institutions in the United States. This may be verified by a check of the roster of seventy-four Fellows of the Seminar provided as an appendix. Not one member of the New Testament faculty from Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Duke, University of Chicago, Union Theological Seminary, Vanderbilt, SMU, or Catholic University is involved in this project. It probably goes without saying that the faculties of evangelical seminaries are not represented here. Nor are any major scholars from England or the Continent.

This is not to say that the Seminar participants are without credentials. They hold doctorates from reputable institutions, with Claremont and Harvard being the most heavily represented, in that order. The point is simply that this imaginative book has been produced by a self-selected body of scholars who hold a set of unconventional views about Jesus and the gospels. They are of course free to publish these views; however, their attempt to present these views as "the assured results of critical scholarship" is—one must say it—reprehensible deception.

The Seminar's disingenuous self-representation stands in service of a larger agenda: the deliberate creation of a new gospel. *The Five Gospels* is the realization of a vision clearly articulated by Funk in his keynote address at the opening meeting of the Jesus Seminar in 1985, subsequently published in *Forum*, the Westar Institute's journal. "The religious establishment has not allowed the intelligence of high scholarship to pass through pastors and priests to a hungry laity," and television preachers have "played on the ignorance of the uninformed." Thus, the Jesus Seminar rides to the rescue: "Our work . . . will spell liberty for . . . millions." Funk opines that "we are having increasing difficulty these days in accepting the biblical account of the creation and of the apocalyptic conclusion in anything like a literal sense." For him, the Bible's story of the world's history and destiny is a narrative fiction that has lost its credibility and usefulness in late modernity. It is not only the mythic beginning and ending of the Bible that have become problematic, however, but also the "hypothetical middle—Jesus of Nazareth." After all, as we are informed in *The Five Gospels*, "the Christ of creed and dogma, who had been firmly in place in the Middle Ages, can no longer command the assent of those who have seen the heavens through Galileo's telescope.... Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo have dismantled the mythical abodes of the gods and bequeathed us secular heavens."

To put the matter bluntly, we are having as much trouble with the middle—the messiah—as we are with the terminal points. What we need is a new fiction that takes as its starting point the central event in the Judeo-Christian drama and reconciles that middle with a new story that reaches beyond old beginnings and endings. In sum, we need a new narrative of Jesus, a new gospel, if you will, that places Jesus differently in the grand scheme, the epic story.

In the work of the Jesus Seminar, Funk's desideratum has been achieved: a new gospel that disposes of the embarrassments of apocalyptic ends. The pathos—or bathos—of the project resides in the incongruity between Funk's epic pretensions and the actual findings of the Seminar. Does the passive, politically correct, laconic sage who speaks in the red type of *The Five Gospels* have the capacity to remake our imaginative world and provide a new fiction within which millions might find meaning for their lives? Surely not.

But even if the grand design of liberating millions through a new gospel should fail to pan out, Funk also has a more modest and realistic aim: "If we are to survive as scholars of the humanities, as well as theologians, we must quit the academic closet. And we must begin to sell a product that has some utilitarian value to someone—or which at least appears to have utilitarian value to someone." Presumably, in the commercial realm, *The Five Gospels* will fulfill this hope. This likelihood is immeasurably enhanced by the fact



that one of the "Fellows" of the Jesus Seminar is moviemaker Paul Verhoeven (*Robocop*, *Basic Instinct*), who reportedly plans to turn the Seminar's findings into a Hollywood screenplay.

Funk's concern for the *appearance* of utilitarian value perhaps explains the peculiar way in which *The Five Gospels* deploys the rhetoric of empiricism ("empirical, factual evidence," "independent, neutral observers"), despite Funk's own earlier avowal that "our fictions, though deliberately fictive, are nevertheless not subject to proof or falsification." If indeed, as Funk suggests, "we need a fiction that we recognize to be fictive," the present volume is an odd way of filling the prescription. *The Five Gospels* purports to offer precisely the opposite: a factual Jesus discovered by scientific methods and disentangled from the fictive Jesus rendered in the gospel narratives. Truth in advertising would be served if Funk's 1985 essay were published in place of the book's present introduction.

So, when I return my brother-in-law's phone call, here is what I shall say: No, the case argued by this book would not stand up in any court. The critical study of the historical Jesus is an important task—perhaps important for reasons theological as well as historical—but *The Five Gospels* does not advance that task significantly, nor does it represent a fair picture of the current state of research on this problem. Some of its purported revelations are old news, and many of its novel claims are at best dubious. No, I was not involved in the project, nor were any of my colleagues at Yale and Duke, all of whom share my view that the Jesus Seminar is methodologically misguided. Should you take it seriously? Only if you want to compare its findings to other scholarly reconstructions of Jesus of Nazareth. If you are interested in the problem, there are at least a dozen other books I would recommend in preference to this one. But their authors are less likely to be interviewed on the radio: no scandalous sound bites.

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## Wheaton Fall Philosophy Conference

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## The First Wild Whisper

Above all, would not such a new reader of the New Testament stumble over something that would startle him much more than it startles us? I have here more than once attempted the rather impossible task of reversing time and the historic method; and in fancy looking forward to the facts, instead of backward through the memories. So I have imagined the monster that man might have seemed at first to the nature around him. We should have a worse shock if we really imagined the nature of Christ named for the first time. What should we feel at the first whisper of a certain suggestion about a certain man? Certainly it is not for us to blame anybody who should find that first wild whisper merely impious and insane. On the contrary, stumbling on that rock of scandal is the first step. Stark staring incredulity is a far more loyal tribute to that truth than a modernist metaphysic that would make it out merely a matter of degree. It were better to rend our robes with a great cry of blasphemy, like Caiaphas in the judgment, or to lay hold of the man as a maniac possessed of devils like the kinsmen and the crowd, rather than to stand stupidly debating five shades of pantheism in the presence of so catastrophic a claim. There is more of the wisdom that is one with surprise in any simple person, full of the sensitiveness of simplicity, who should expect the grass to wither and the birds to drop out of the air, when a strolling carpenter's apprentice said calmly and almost carelessly, like one looking over his shoulder: 'Before Abraham was, I am.'

G.K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, p.201

“What Have They Said About Jesus?”

1) Friedrich Schleiermacher offered an adoptionist understanding of Jesus that rejected His preexistence. Jesus was not the eternal Son of God become human, the *Logos* incarnate. For Schleiermacher, what distinguished Jesus from other humans was “the constant potency of his God-consciousness, which was a veritable existence of God in him.”<sup>1</sup> Recommending belief in inspiration instead of incarnation he presented Jesus as a God-filled man, not the God-man. This Jesus, who differed from us only in having been a better person than we are, is an example for us to follow. But, he cannot be our Savior in the biblical understanding.

2) The conviction of the history-of-religions school was that Christ’s preexistence and incarnation were myths intended to give him a stature equal to that of other heroic figures of his day. Jesus’ preexistence resulted from the attempt to push his divine status earlier and earlier in his existence.

Rudolf Bultmann argued for his (in)famous gnostic-redeemer myth, which he identified as the source for the idea of Christ’s preexistence. However, Samuel Sandmel described the frantic attempt to find parallels in different religious and philosophical settings without regard for context and consistency of internal development as “parallelomania.”<sup>2</sup>

3) John Macquarrie: “Jesus Christ pre-existed in the mind and purpose of God, and I doubt if one should look for any other kind of pre-existence.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 97.

<sup>2</sup>S. Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *JBL* 81 (1962), 1-13.

<sup>3</sup>J. Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990), 57.

4) James Dunn concludes that the only NT document to express a belief in Christ's real preexistence is the fourth gospel. He says that the synoptics contain no hint of the belief and that the Pauline letters and Hebrews affirm an ideal preexistence (view #3 above). He identifies much of the Pauline corpus as having an Adam Christology and sees wisdom Christology as influential elsewhere. Dunn admits that "Phil. 2:6-11 certainly seems on the face of it to be a straightforward statement contrasting Christ's pre-existent glory and post-crucifixion exaltation with his earthly humiliation."<sup>4</sup> But he agrees that this appearance results from presuppositions brought to the text, not from conclusions drawn from the text. He suggests that the passage is best understood as an expression of Adam Christology.

5) John Hick describes himself as standing in the tradition of Schleiermacher, Strauss and Harnack.<sup>5</sup> Hick's Jesus was "a human being extraordinarily open to God's influence and thus living to an extraordinary extent as God's agent on earth, 'incarnating' the divine purpose for human life."<sup>6</sup> He considers the importance of Christ to lie in his teaching rather than his work. As a result, Christ could not have been unique because most of his teaching is not unique.

"If [Jesus] was indeed God incarnate, Christianity is the only religion founded by God in person, and must as such be uniquely superior to all other religions."<sup>7</sup> He disbelieves this and sees Jesus as simply one teacher among many. He wants to

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<sup>4</sup>J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 114.

<sup>5</sup>J. Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 18.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, ix.

reconceive Christianity as a religion that is "centered upon the universally relevant religious experience and ethical insights of Jesus *when these are freed from the mass of ecclesiastical dogmas and practices that have developed over the centuries.*"<sup>8</sup> This requires, says Hick, breaking free of the network of theories about incarnation, the Trinity, and atonement that he says once helped focus Christian thought.

### A 'more effective' Jesus

"I don't think that we can fully appreciate who Jesus became unless we realize the overwhelming difficulties He must have had as an illegitimate child in a small provincial town. The teacher is much more effective than the superhuman figure who bears the sins of the world. And people don't feel so guilty about being human and flawed themselves."

—Translator STEPHEN MITCHELL  
(quoted in *Psychology Today*  
Nov/Dec 1996, page 32)

### Jesus books

Worldwide over 65,571 books have been written about Jesus Christ, according to missions researcher David Barrett. Currently there is a "global boom" in books about Christ, with an average of four new books coming out every single day.

—Baptists Today, Jul 24, 1997 (page 26)

"We're more popular than Jesus Christ now ... Some of the pop stars I like are more important to me than God ... I would hope we mean more to people than putting money in a church basket and saying 10 Hail Marys on a Sunday." Noel Gallagher, on the influence of his band, Oasis

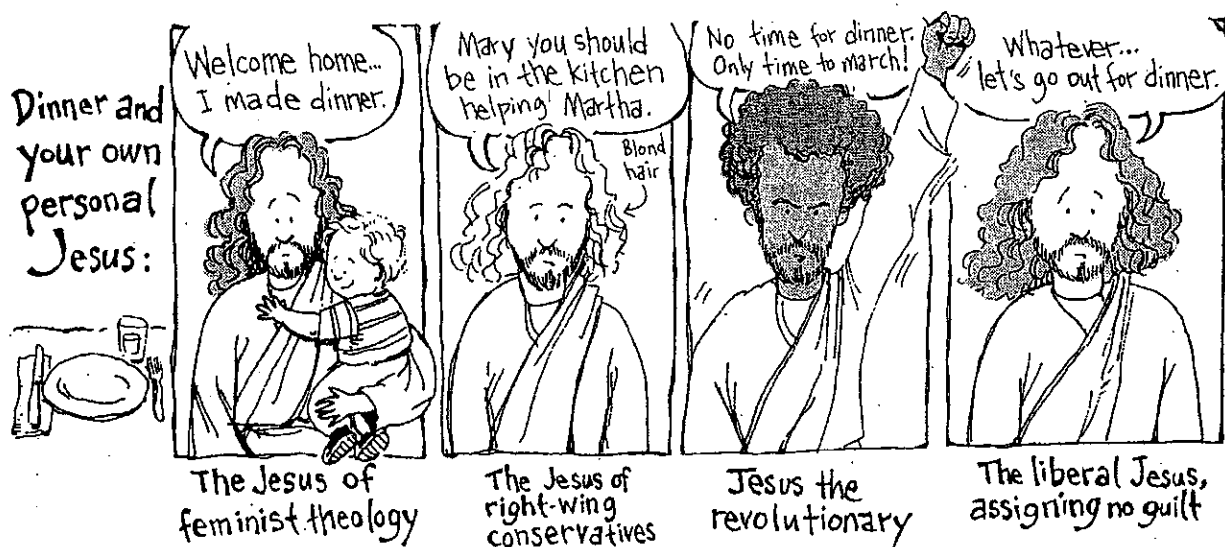
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### Affirmation or denial?

"I affirm the resurrection of Jesus, but I have no idea if anything happened to his corpse."

—Jesus Seminar scholar MARCUS BORG  
(quoted in *Pastoral Psychology*,  
Nov 1996, page 97)

"No one individual person should have as much control of the media as Rupert Murdoch has here in Britain. I don't care who it is—Jesus Christ or Muhammad." Media mogul Ted Turner, taking a swipe at his archrival



<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 13.

DOES GOD REALLY KNOW:

At the end of time, billions of people were scattered on a great plain before God's Throne. Some of the groups near the front talked heatedly. "How can God judge us? How can He know about suffering?" snapped a brunette. She jerked back a sleeve to reveal a tattooed number from a Nazi concentration camp. "We endured terror, beatings, torture, death!"

In another group, a negro man lowered his collar. "What about this?", he demanded, showing an ugly rope burn. "Lynched for no crime but being a negro. We have suffered in slave ships, been wrenched from loved ones, toiled till only death gave release."

Far out across the plain were hundreds of such groups. At last, they were ready to present their case. Before God would be qualified to be their judge, He must endure what they had endured. Their decision was that God "should be sentenced to live on earth as a man!"

Let Him be born a Jew. Let the legitimacy of His birth be doubted, so that none will know who His father really is. Let Him champion a cause so just, but so radical that it brings upon Him the hate, condemnation, and eliminating efforts of every major traditional and established religious authority. Let Him be betrayed by His dearest friends. Let Him be indicted of false charges, tried before a prejudicial jury, and convicted by a cowardly judge. Let Him see what it is to be completely abandoned by every living thing. Let Him be tortured, and let Him die. Let Him die a most humiliating death with common thieves.

When the last leader finished pronouncing sentence there was a long silence. For suddenly they knew...God had already served His sentence.

*Mary had a little lamb,  
His soul was white as snow.  
And everywhere the Father sent The  
Lamb was sure to go.  
He came to earth to die one day,  
the sin of man to atone.  
And now he reigns in heaven above,  
The Lamb upon the throne.*