

---

---

# THE BLUE BANNER

---

---

Special Issue

*For Christ's Crown & Covenant*

Presbyterian Tract

---

---

## ***Christ the Mediator* by W. Gary Crampton, Th.D.**

| CONTENTS  |  |
|---|--|
| 1   | <i>Publisher's Foreword</i><br>by Richard Bacon              |
| 2   | <i>Introduction</i>  |
| 3   | <i>Chapter One: Christ<br/>and the Covenant of<br/>Grace</i> |
| 7   | <i>Chapter Two: The<br/>Person of Christ</i>                 |
| 25  | <i>Chapter Three: The<br/>Work of Christ</i>                 |
| 43  | <i>Appendix: Christian<br/>Exclusivism</i>                   |
| <i>All material in this issue<br/>Copyright © 2000 by The<br/>Blue Banner, a ministry of<br/>First Presbyterian Church<br/>Rowlett, unless otherwise<br/>noted.</i> |  |

Once again, it is Blue Banner's privilege to present to the reading public a work from the pen of Dr. Gary Crampton. Previously Dr. Crampton has written a number of articles for the Blue Banner newsletter and it has also been our pleasure to publish his collaborative with me on the doctrine of the church, *Built Upon The Rock*.

The Apostle Paul told the Corinthian church at First Corinthians 2:2 that he was determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and him crucified. In making such a claim, Paul was asserting the central character of the doctrine of the person and work of Jesus Christ. He later told the same Corinthians that it was his policy to preach "not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (Second Corinthians 4:5).

It is vital to the Christian life, then, that we know the person and work of Jesus Christ. Much is being said in Evangelical circles today about desiring a "relationship rather than a religion." That is a pity, because as often as not that desire springs from a commitment, not to the historical Christ of Scripture, but to some Christ of one's own imagining.

The Blue Banner publishes this tract with the sincere hope that men may come to know Jesus Christ, and thus have eternal life as Scripture teaches "This is life eternal: that they might know...the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [he] has sent" (John 17:3).

# Christ the Mediator:

## A Study of Westminster Christology

W. Gary Crampton, Th.D.

### *Introduction*

It was at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus asked His disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” (*Matthew* 16:15). The question, though a simple one, has to do with matters of eternal consequence. Peter answered his Lord: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (verse 16). According to Jesus, no other answer was satisfactory. Only this response would receive His encomium: “Blessed are you Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (verse 17).

Two thousand years later the same is true. There is still “no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (*Acts* 4:12). Jesus Christ is still “the way, the truth, and the life, [and] no one comes to the Father except through [Him]” (*John* 14:6). Jesus Himself declared that the eternal destiny of all men depended upon their belief about Him: “if you do not believe that I AM [the covenant name for God, *Jehovah*], you will die in your sins” (*John* 8:24). As the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Q 21) says: “the only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Certainly to John Calvin it was no overstatement to maintain that for the elect of God, every benefit, including their eternal destiny, is based on their saving knowledge of (and thus, their union with) Jesus Christ:

We see that our whole salvation and

all its parts are comprehended in Christ (*Acts* 4:12). We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else. If we seek salvation, we are taught by the name of Jesus, that it is of Him (*1 Corinthians* 1:30). If we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in His anointing. If we seek strength, it lies in His dominion; if purity, in His conception; if gentleness, it appears in His birth. For by His birth He was made like us in all respects (*Hebrews* 2:17) that He might learn to feel our pain (confirm *Hebrews* 5:2). If we seek redemption, it lies in His passion; if acquittal, in His condemnation; if remission of the curse, in His cross (*Galatians* 3:13); if satisfaction, in His sacrifice; if purification, in His blood; if reconciliation, in His descent into hell; if mortification of the flesh, in His tomb; if newness of life, in His resurrection; if immortality, in the same; if inheritance of the heavenly kingdom, in His entrance into heaven; if protection, if security, if abundant supply of all blessings, in His kingdom; if untroubled expectation of judgment, in the power given to Him to judge. In short, since rich store of every kind of goods abounds in Him, let us drink our fill from this fountain,

and from no other.<sup>1</sup>

This being the case, the importance of the study of the doctrine of Christ (“Christology”) can hardly be overemphasized. Such will be the focus of this book. Theologians normally subdivide the study of Christology into two parts: Christ’s Person (ontology: who He is), and Christ’s work (function: what He does). These two must never be separated, but they must be distinguished. And we will begin by studying the Person of Christ. For the work of Christ, no matter how great, loses its significance if He is not the God-man as taught in Scripture. Before we begin this study, however, we will first examine God’s eternal plan of salvation and covenant theology.

### ***Chapter One***

#### **God’s Eternal Plan of Salvation and Covenant Theology**

According to chapter three of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*:

God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass....

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life....

These angels, thus predestinated...are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the

foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, has chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.

As God has appointed the elect unto glory, so has He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, fore-ordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

What the *Confession* is defining here is God’s eternal plan of salvation. The Bible teaches that God has eternally decreed all things that will ever take place (*Ephesians* 1:4,11; *Isaiah* 14:24-27). Nothing can change His sovereign decree. It is founded in wisdom (*Ephesians* 3:9-11), and is eternally fixed (*Job* 42:2). As there is only one decree, there can only be one eternal purpose. Yet, this eternal purpose (*prothesis*, which is always found in the singular: *Ephesians* 1:11; 3:11; *Romans* 8:28; 9:11-13; 2 *Timothy* 1:9) consists of several parts. Therefore, theologians generally refer to the divine “decrees” (plural).

Moreover, the various parts of God’s eternal decree should be viewed as standing in a logical, rather than in a chronological, order. God is omniscient. He does not

---

<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Vols. I & II, Library of the Christian Classics, John T. McNeill, editor, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), II:16:19.

have a succession of ideas; that is, He does not learn facts one after another. God eternally knows all things, simply because He is all knowing: "Known to God from eternity are all His works" (*Acts* 15:18).

But, even though God does not have a succession of ideas, He does have an idea of succession. Hence, His eternal purpose consists of several parts, which have a logical relationship. In short, God has an eternal plan. B. B. Warfield writes:

It does not seem necessary to pause to discuss the previous question whether God, in His saving activities, acts upon a plan. That God acts upon a plan in all His activities, is already given in theism. On the establishment of a personal God, this question is closed. For person means purpose: precisely what distinguishes a person from a thing is that its modes of action are purposive, that all it does is directed to an end and proceeds through the choice of means to that end....

If we believe in a personal God, then, and much more if, being theists, we believe in the immediate control by this personal God of the world He has made, we must believe in a plan underlying all that God does, and therefore also in a plan of salvation. The only question that can arise concerns not the reality but the nature of the plan.<sup>2</sup>

What, according to Scripture, is the eternal purpose of God? Simply stated, God's eternal purpose is to glorify Himself (*Isaiah* 43:7,21; *1 Corinthians* 15:28; *Philippians* 2:11), through the glorification of His Son, as the "firstborn among many brethren" (*Romans* 8:29), and the Lord of the church (*Colossians* 1:18). In God's eternal purpose,

He determined that His Son would be the bridegroom of His church, which would be conformed to His image (*Romans* 8:29; *2 Corinthians* 3:17-18). Thus, He has determined to save a people (the church) whom He has eternally chosen.

In *Ephesians* 1:9-10 we read that the Person and work of Jesus Christ is at the beginning, center, and end of God's eternal purpose. In *Ephesians* 3:9-11 Paul writes that "God created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that [i.e., for the purpose of] now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places." This was "according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." Thus, the church of Christ stands with her Redeemer at the beginning, center, and end of God's eternal purpose. This is further confirmed in *Romans* 8:28; 9:11-13; and *2 Timothy* 1:9.

It is apparent from Scripture passages such as *Isaiah* 53:10-11; *Hebrews* 13:20; and *Revelation* 13:8, that there was an eternal counsel of the triune God which preceded creation. This eternal counsel is sometimes referred to as the covenant of redemption to distinguish it from the execution in history of this eternal decree, which is designated the covenant of grace. In this eternal counsel, God the Father, representing the Trinity, covenanted with God the Son, representing the church, to redeem elect sinners. As stated in the *Westminster Confession* (8:1):

It pleased God [the Father], in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man...unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (Boonton: Simpson Publishing Company, 1989), 6-7.

Once the eternal purpose was established, the triune God rationally determined the means by which He would accomplish His purpose. This is called the supralapsarian (*supra*, above; *lapsus*, fall) view of the order of the divine decrees. That is, the logical order of the divine decrees finds the decree to elect and reprobate prior to, or above (*supra*) the decree to bring about the Fall (*lapsus*). This is in accord with the passages we have noted. The infralapsarian (*infra*, below) view, on the other hand, claims that the decree to elect and reprobate was after, or below (*infra*) the decree to bring about the Fall.

The supralapsarian view is the most Biblical. A rational planner carries out his plan in the inverse order of his determined purpose. That is, the temporal order is the reverse of the logical order. God, who is always rational, and who always acts with a purpose, would naturally act in this fashion. A consistent supralapsarianism maintains that the logical order of the divine decrees, to glorify the Father, through the glorification of His Son, is as follows:

The decree to elect some sinful men to salvation in Christ (*Ephesians* 1:3-14), and to reprobate the others (*Romans* 9:22-23).

The decree to redeem the elect sinners, both Old and New Testaments, through the redemptive cross work of Christ (*Ephesians* 1:7).

The decree to bring about the Fall through Adam, the federal head of the human race (*Genesis* 3; *Romans* 5:12-19).

The decree to create the world (including mankind) in order to provide the arena in which all of these things would occur (*Genesis* 1).

In summary, Robert Reymond writes:

In His eternal purpose God intentionally integrated both the purpose of creation as such as well as the or-

dinances of creation into the more primary redemptive plan which He accomplished in Christ...Creation then was intended as the stage on which God's redemptive design is enacted and fulfilled....Creation's *raison d'être* then is to serve the redemptive ends of God.<sup>3</sup>

The Person and work of Christ stands (with His church) at the beginning, center, and end of God's redemptive purpose. Christ is "the Lamb [of God] slain from the foundation of the world" (*Revelation* 13:8). Long before the fall of Adam, the sacrificial cross work of Christ was planned. Then, in "the fullness of the times," Christ came, as the *Shorter Catechism* (Q 21) says, as "the Redeemer of God's elect," and all things have been redemptively summed up in Him (*Ephesians* 1:9-10; *Colossians* 1:20).

As noted above, the eternal plan of salvation, wherein Christ and His redemptive work in behalf of His church are central, is grounded in the inter-Trinitarian counsel which is referred to as the covenant of redemption. Then when the plan was executed it was carried out by means of covenant. This being so, it is not an overstatement to claim that a proper understanding of covenant theology is essential if one is to have a Biblical comprehension of the relationship between God and His creatures. According to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (7:1):

The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescen-

---

<sup>3</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 397-398.

sion on God's part, which He has been pleased to express by way of covenant.

Man, says the *Confession*, owes obedience to God, simply because he is God's creature. But man "could never have any fruition of Him as [his] blessedness and reward" apart from the fact that God has chosen to enter into covenant with His creature. The Bible teaches that when God created Adam He entered into a covenant of works with him. As stated in the *Confession* (7:2): "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him [as the federal head of the entire human race] to his posterity, upon perfect and personal obedience."

As we read in *Romans* 5, however, Adam disobeyed God. And as he was the federal or covenantal head of all mankind, his sin was imputed to the entirety of humanity. Says the *Shorter Catechism* (Q 16): "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression."

All men, therefore, as a result of the Fall, are judicially guilty. Adam's sin has been imputed to all. This state in which man finds himself, as claimed by the *Confession* (6:2,4), is one of "total depravity." That is, man so fell from his state of "original righteousness, and communion with God, [that he] became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body." Hence, mankind is now "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil."

But, as the *Shorter Catechism* (Q 20-21) teaches, God did not leave all mankind to perish in this state: "God having, out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them

out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer...the Lord Jesus Christ." And the covenant of grace, which is the historical execution of the covenant of redemption, as the *Larger Catechism* (Q 31) says, "was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in Him with all the elect as His seed."

And, as the *Confession* (7:4) goes on to maintain, the way the elect inherit their everlasting inheritance is by means of the testamentary death of the covenant inaugurator Jesus Christ: "This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in the Scripture by the name of a testament, in reference to both the death of Jesus Christ the testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed."

Moreover, in contrast to the erroneous asseverations of Dispensationalism, as found, for example, in the *Scotfield Reference Bible*, the *New Scotfield Reference Bible*, and the *Ryrie Study Bible*, the Bible teaches that there is one covenant of grace that runs throughout the entirety of redemptive history, and there is only one means of salvation. As stated in the *Confession* (7:5-6):

This covenant [of grace] was differently administered in the time of the law [Old Testament], and in the time of the gospel [New Testament]: under the law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament.

Under the gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant [of grace] is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper: which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory, yet, in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament. There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.

The covenant of grace was initially revealed in *Genesis* 3:15, with the first Messianic or “gospel promise” (the *protevan-gelium*), directly subsequent to the Fall. As taught in the *Confession* (7:3):

Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant [of works], the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace: whereby He freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.

As Paul teaches in *Ephesians* 2:12, there is a thematic unity of all the covenants. He writes of “the (plural) covenants” of “the (singular) promise.” “The promise” is the covenant of grace. All of the covenants that God established with His people (e.g., Adam, Noah, Abraham, David) are a development of the one covenant of grace. Or said another way: “The ‘promise’ is singular, to signify that the covenant [of grace], in reality, and substantially, is one and the same at all times, but only different

in its accidents and external circumstances.”<sup>4</sup>

With the coming of the New Testament age, “the promise” which ran through the entirety of the Old Testament reached its fulfillment, with the advent of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Writes Calvin:

The first promise of salvation was given to Adam [in *Genesis* 3:15]...There it glowed like a feeble spark. Then, as it was added to, the light grew in fullness, breaking forth increasingly and shedding its radiance more widely. At last – when all the clouds were dispersed – Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, fully illuminated the whole earth.<sup>5</sup>

As the New Testament teaches, Christ accomplished redemption on behalf of the elect, thus bringing to fruition all of the types of the earlier covenants (*Hebrews* 8-10). He is the “Amen” to all of the promises of God (*2 Corinthians* 1:20). In Christ, all things “which are written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” reach their fulfillment (*Luke* 24:44).

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Person of Christ**

As presented in the “Introduction,” the study of Christology deals with the doctrine of the Person (ontology) and work (function) of Jesus Christ. Modern day scholarship often attempts to separate these two aspects of Christology. Oscar Cullmann, for example, criticizes the early church (as witnessed in the Councils of Nicea [325] and Chalcedon [451]) for fo-

---

<sup>4</sup> Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 1284-1285.

<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Vols. I & II, Library of the Christian Classics, John T. McNeill, editor, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), II:10:20.

cusing too highly on Christ's Person (who He is). Rather, says Cullmann, the concern of the New Testament is with His function (what He does).<sup>6</sup> However, as Robert Reymond points out:

I would insist that it is really rather superficial to suggest that men can forever concentrate on what Jesus did for them and never address the ontological question of who He is. Indeed, it is as psychologically impossible for modern men as it was for the men of New Testament times to be satisfied with an interest only in Jesus' functional significance and never question or address the ontological issue that His functional significance forces upon them.<sup>7</sup>

Reymond is correct. The Person of Christ and the work of Christ are inseparably related. But since the former is foundational to the latter, this chapter will concern itself with His Person. First we will overview the name and titles that the Bible ascribes to Jesus Christ. This will give us insight into both His Person and His work.

In the Bible, names are very important. Sometimes a person's name is the equivalent of the one bearing it. The man Nabal (the name in Hebrew means "fool"), for example, was just like his name: "For as his name is, so is he: Nabal [fool] is his name, and folly is with him" (*1 Samuel* 25:25). At other times, the changing of a person's name represented his change in status. When God changed Abram's name to Abraham (meaning "the father of many"), it was to signify that he would become "the father of many nations" (*Genesis* 17:5).

---

<sup>6</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, translated by S. C. Guthrie and C. A. M. Hall (London: SCM Press, 1959), 3-17.

<sup>7</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New Testament Witness* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990), 12-13.

The name of God is particularly significant. It is virtually synonymous with God Himself. According to the writers of Holy Scripture, the Lord saves by His "name" (*Psalms* 54:1), He protects by His "name" (*Psalms* 20:1), and His "name" is a "strong tower" where the righteous find refuge (*Proverbs* 18:10). Further, the godly trust in His "name" (*Psalms* 20:7), they rejoice in His "name" (*Psalms* 89:16), and pray by calling on His "name" (*Psalms* 80:18; *Matthew* 6:9). One is never to take God's "name" in vain (*Exodus* 20:7), nor to swear falsely by His "name" (*Leviticus* 19:12). In fact, as *Leviticus* 24:16 teaches, so strong was the prohibition against blaspheming the "name" of the Lord (i.e., God Himself), that it was considered a capital offense.

The same may be said regarding the "titles" ascribed to God in Scripture. "God most high" (*Genesis* 14:19-20), "Lord" or "Master" (*Genesis* 15:2; *Psalms* 8:1,9), and "God Almighty" (*Genesis* 17:1; *Exodus* 6:3), are examples of titles that tell us something significant about the God of Scripture.

This being so, a study of the name and titles of Jesus Christ should give us greater insight regarding who He is and what He does.

### **The Name "Jesus"**

In *Matthew* 1:18-25 and *Luke* 1:26-38 we read of the angelic birth announcement of the incarnate Son of God. Gabriel tells Joseph and Mary that the name of the virgin conceived child is to be "Jesus" (*Iesous*), "for He will save His people from their sins" (*Matthew* 1:21).

"Jesus" means "Jehovah saves." The same name was borne by Israel's Old Testament leader Joshua, the son of Nun (*Joshua* 1:1). He was a type of Christ as he led Israel into the promised land (*Hebrews* 4:8). The name Jesus stresses the saving work of the God-man; it speaks to His ministerial objective. Jesus is the only Redeemer of



God's elect, both Old and New Testaments alike (*Romans* 3:21-31). He is the only way to the Father (*John* 14:6); He is the "Savior of the world" (*John* 4:42; *1 John* 4:14). Interestingly, Christians in the early church bore witness to Jesus as Savior when they used the sign of the "fish" as a signal of recognition. The letters of the Greek word for "fish" (*ichthus*) form an acronym: "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior."

### **Christological Titles**

Technically speaking, *Iesous* is Jesus' only name. The boy Jesus would have been known as "Jesus *bar* (son of) Joseph." But although there is only one actual name for the incarnate Son of God, there are a number of titles. As R. C. Sproul says: "Jesus' own name carries within it the idea of Savior. His titles...all indicate Jesus' qualifications to be the Savior of men."<sup>8</sup>

### **Christ**

Although there may be times in the New Testament when *Christos* is used as practically a proper name, in actuality it is a title. The title *Christos* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Mashiach* (Messiah). It is the most frequently used of all of Jesus' titles. *Christos* means "anointed one." Jesus Christ is the one anointed by God to be the Savior of His people. As taught in the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (Q 42):

Our Mediator was called Christ, because He was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure; and so set apart, and fully furnished with all authority and ability, to execute the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King of His church, in the estate both of His humiliation and exaltation.

In *Mark* 14:61-62 and *John* 4:25-26; 17:3, Jesus Himself claims to be the Christ of

God (see also *Matthew* 16:16 and *John* 11:25-27). And as Christ the Savior (*John* 17:3; *Titus* 1:4; 2:13; 3:6), He is necessarily divine (confirm *Mark* 14:61-62), because as we read in *Isaiah* 43:11 and 45:21, only God can save.

In the Old Covenant, prophets (*1 Kings* 19:16; *Psalms* 105:15; *Isaiah* 61:1-2), priests (*Exodus* 29:7; *Psalms* 133:2), and kings (*1 Samuel* 10:1; 16:13; *Psalms* 2:2,6), were all "anointed" to carry out their God-given callings. The same is true of Jesus, the Christ. At His baptism, He was "anointed" by the Holy Spirit (*Matthew* 3:16-17; *Hebrews* 1:9), and as the *Shorter Catechism* (Q 23) says, comes "as our Redeemer, [and] executes the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King."

How does Christ execute the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King? Says the *Catechism* (Q 24-26):<sup>9</sup>

Christ executes the office as a Prophet in revealing to us, by His Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.

Christ executes the office of Priest, in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.

Christ executes the office of a King, in subduing us to Himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies.

There are other titles used of Jesus, some of which will be studied below in greater detail, which stress His three-fold office. For instance, He is called "prophet" (*Luke* 7:16; *John* 6:14; *Acts* 3:22-23), "teacher" (*Matthew* 12:38; 22:16), "rabbi" (*John* 20:16), and the "Word" (*John* 1:1,14; *1 John* 1:1;

<sup>8</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Following Christ* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1991), 51.

<sup>9</sup> These three offices will be studied in greater detail under "The Work of Christ" in the next chapter.

*Revelation* 19:13). These titles speak to Jesus' prophetic ministry. The New Testament authors also call Him "servant" (*Matthew* 12:18; *Mark* 10:45), in fulfillment of the Isaianic suffering servant passages. And the author of *Hebrews* says that Jesus is a priest "according to the order of Melchizedek" (5:6,10; 7:17). These two titles speak to Christ's priestly role. And Jesus is also called "the Son of David" (*Matthew* 22:42-45), a title which refers to His kingly function.

### Lord

"Lord" (*Kurios*) is the second most used of Jesus' titles. In the Old Testament we read that God's name is *Jehovah* or *Yahweh*. He is the great "I AM," the covenant God of Israel (*Exodus* 3:10-15). God is also called *Adonai*, the Lord and Master of the universe (*Psalms* 110:1; *Isaiah* 6:1). In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament), *Kurios* is used to translate both *Jehovah* and *Adonai*. So when the New Testament refers to Jesus as *Kurios*, is it ascribing deity to Him. According to Scripture, Jesus is both *Jehovah* (*Romans* 10:13, compare *Joel* 2:32; *1 Peter* 3:14-15, compare *Isaiah* 8:12-13; *Hebrews* 1:10-12, compare *Psalms* 102:25-27) and *Adonai* (*Matthew* 22:43-45; *Hebrews* 1:13; 5:6, compare *Psalms* 110:1-4). That is to say, the title *Kurios* speaks to Christ's divine nature. He is ontic deity; He is "Christ the Lord [*Kurios*]" (*Luke* 2:11).

Then there are the numerous "I AM" passages ascribed to Jesus Christ. In the *Gospel of John*, Jesus says: I AM "the bread of life" (6:35), "the light of the world" (8:12), "the door of the sheep" (10:7), "the good shepherd" (10:11), "the resurrection and the life" (11:25), "the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6), and "the true vine" (15:1). Christ also says: "if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins" (8:24); "before Abraham was, I AM" (8:58); and "now I tell you before it comes, that when

it does come to pass, you may believe that I AM" (13:19). These are extraordinary statements in which Jesus is claiming Himself to be no less than *Jehovah*. God incarnate.

### Son of Man

This is the third most frequently used of Jesus' titles. It is His own favorite means of self-designation. "Son of Man" occurs some 84 times in the New Testament, 82 of them in the four Gospels (69 in the Synoptics – *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* – and 13 in *John*). In almost every case where the title is used in the Gospels it is used by Jesus Himself.

Jesus Christ is not only the "Son of God," He is also the "Son of Man." In distinguishing between these two titles there can be little question that the former speaks of Jesus' divine nature, and as Calvin points out, the later speaks to His human nature.<sup>10</sup> However, even though this title has reference to Christ's humanity, as the suffering Servant (*Mark* 8:31;; 9:31; 10:33-34,45), it also has reference to His deity (*Matthew* 16:27-28; *John* 3:13-14). As the Son of Man, Jesus is the giver of spiritual life (*John* 6:62-63), the one who has authority to forgive sins (*Mark* 2:10), and "Lord of the Sabbath" (*Mark* 2:28). As the Son of Man, He would be seen "sitting at the right hand of the Power [God the Father], and coming with the clouds of heaven" (*Mark* 14:62). And as the Son of Man, Jesus "has been given authority to execute judgment" upon mankind (*John* 5:27).

This title can be traced back to *Daniel* 7:13-14, where the Son of Man is revealed as co-equal with God the Father. A comparison of *Daniel* 7:9-10 and *Revelation* 1:12-16; 5:11-12, shows the exalted nature of the

<sup>10</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Vols. I & II, Library of the Christian Classics, John T. McNeill, editor, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), II:13:2.

Biblical Son of Man. With these things in mind, B. B. Warfield writes:

It is...in the picture which Jesus Himself draws for us the "Son of Man" that we see His superhuman nature portrayed. For the figure thus brought before us is distinctly a superhuman one; one which is not only in the future to be seen sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven...; but which in the present world itself exercises functions which are truly divine.<sup>11</sup>

### **Son of David**

This Messianic title speaks to Jesus' kingly role. The Old Testament prophesied that the Messiah would be from the line of David (*2 Samuel* 7; *Isaiah* 11:1-2; *Psalms* 89). The New Testament confirms that Jesus is the Messiah. He is, writes Matthew, "the Son of David" (*Matthew* 1:1). Luke declares that "the Lord God will give Him [Jesus] the throne of His father David" (*Luke* 1:32). Further, in one of His discussions with the Pharisees, Jesus Himself claimed to be David's greater Son, in fulfillment of *Psalms* 110:1 (confirm *Matthew* 22:41-45). And as *Psalms* 110:1 attributes divine Lordship to the Son of David, it attributes deity to Jesus Christ (*Romans* 1:3-4). In fact, it was just because blind Bartimaeus realized that Jesus was the divine "Son of David" that he called on the Son to "have mercy on me [Bartimaeus]" (*Mark* 10:46-48). Robert Reymond correctly asserts that even though the title Son of David "is certainly not a dominant title in the Gospels; yet when it does occur, it clearly ascribes Messiahship to Jesus; and all the evidence

supports, and none weighs against, His approving acceptance of it."<sup>12</sup>

### **Servant**

As noted, when the New Testament speaks of Jesus as Servant, it is referring to His priestly function. As God's "holy Servant Jesus" (*Acts* 4:27,30; 3:13,26), Christ is the fulfillment of the Isaianic Servant prophecies (*Isaiah* 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12, compare *Matthew* 12:18-21; 20:28). Jesus came not "to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (*Mark* 10:45).

That Jesus Christ, as the great high Priest, is the suffering Servant also speaks to His human nature. The author of *Hebrews* writes that in His priestly role Jesus was made "a little lower than the angels" (2:9); He was dependent on His heavenly Father (2:13); He shared in flesh and blood (2:14); He was subject to temptation (2:18); yet He was found without sin (4:15).

### **Word of God**

Jesus is the *Logos*, He is the Word of God (*John* 1:1,14; *1 John* 1:1; *Revelation* 19:13). This title is pregnant with theological and philosophical significance. According to the *Gospel of John*, Jesus is the cosmological *Logos*, who as King creates and providentially sustains all things in the universe (1:1-3). He is also the soteriological *Logos*, who as Priest saves the elect from their sins (1:4,12,13; 14:6). Then too, He is the epistemological *Logos*, who as Prophet is the "true light which enlightens every man" (1:9), and reveals the Father to the elect (1:18; 14:7,9). As the epistemological *Logos* (the Prophet), which is the primary focus of this title, Jesus came as the supreme and final revelation of God to man (*John* 1:1,14,18; *Hebrews* 1:1-3).

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 41.

<sup>12</sup> Reymond, Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New Testament Witness, 63.

In much of Greek philosophy, the *logos* was that abstract, impersonal principle which allegedly gave purpose, unity, and meaning to all things. In Hebrew thought, on the other hand, a “word” (*logos*) is at one and the same time an inner word and a spoken thought. A word serves two purposes: it gives expression to an inner thought, and it reveals this thought verbally to others. In Semitic belief, then, the *Logos* of God is that which expresses the mind of God. It might even be called the mind of God itself.

Therefore, when John writes that Jesus Christ is the *Logos* of God, he is stating that Jesus, as ontic deity, both expresses and reflects the mind of God. As *John* 1:18 makes clear, He comes to explain (*exegeomai*, “exegete”) the Father to mankind. In His prophetic ministry, Jesus as the Word of God incarnate, gives to us the Word of God inscripturated: the Bible.

Moreover, as Gordon Clark points out, Jesus is “the Logic of God” (the English word “logic” is derived from *logos*). Jesus Christ is truth, reason, and wisdom incarnate (*John* 14:6; *1 Corinthians* 1:24,30; *Colossians* 2:3). And as such, the personal Jesus (not an abstract principle) is the one who gives coherence, unity, consistency, purpose, and meaning to all things. In the words of Paul, Jesus is the one who “holds all things together” (*Colossians* 1:17), bringing order and harmony to the created universe.<sup>13</sup>

## God

There are eight times in the New Testament where Jesus is specifically called God (*Theos*). In the *Gospel of John* we read that “the Word [Jesus] was God” (1:1), and that Jesus openly acknowledged Thomas’s recognition of Him as “my Lord and my God” (20:28). Paul writes that Jesus Christ

is the “eternally blessed God” (*Romans* 9:5), and that “God [Jesus Christ] was manifested in the flesh” (*1 Timothy* 3:16).<sup>14</sup> Paul also calls Him “our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (*Titus* 2:13). In his second epistle, Peter calls Him “our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (*2 Peter* 1:1). The author of *Hebrews*, quoting from *Psalms* 45, calls Jesus “God” (1:8). And in *1 John* 5:20, the apostle John says that “Jesus Christ...is the true God and eternal life.” With the possible exceptions of the “I AM” statements studied above, a higher claim to the deity of Jesus Christ is hardly conceivable. Jesus is God.

Nevertheless, these clear appellations of Christ’s divine nature have not gone unchallenged. With regard to *Romans* 9:5, for example, where the *Authorized Version*, the *Revised Version*, the *American Standard Version*, the *New American Standard Version*, the *New International Version*, and the *New King James Version*, along with the majority of commentators, all adopt the straightforward rendering of this verse as an affirmation of the deity of Jesus Christ, the *Revised Standard Version* and the *New English Bible* demur. They both incorrectly propose translations where “eternally blessed God” is considered as a doxology to the Father, rather than a Christological title. The liberal bias is evident. This writer agrees with John Murray, who after a thorough exe-

<sup>13</sup> See Gordon H. Clark, *The Johannine Logos* (Trinity Foundation, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> The present writer is well aware that the Critical Text (sadly) replaces *Theos* with the relative pronoun *hos* (“who”) in *1 Timothy* 3:16, thus reading “Who was manifested in the flesh.” First, this writer believes that the Majority or Traditional Text is to be followed as the genuine Biblical text, not the Critical Text (For more on this see Gordon H. Clark, *Logical Criticisms of Textual Criticism* [Trinity Foundation, 1986]). And second, even if the Critical Text were adopted here, the context is still overwhelming that the *hos* refers to Jesus Christ as the pre-existent God who “was manifested in the flesh.” See William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 137-140.

getical analysis of the verse maintains: “We may thus conclude that there is no good reason to depart from the traditional construction and interpretation of this verse and, on the other hand, there are preponderant reasons for adopting the same.”<sup>15</sup>

Then we have the Jehovah Witnesses’ *New World Translation* of *John* 1:1: “The Word was a god.” The alleged reason for this translation is that in the original Greek there is no definite article before God; hence, it should be translated “a” god. Numerous commentators and Greek scholars have pointed out, however, that this objection is answered by what it known as “E. C. Colwell’s rule.” This “rule” states that “a definite predicate nominative has the [definite] article when it follows the verb; it does not have the [definite] article when it precedes the verb [as in *John* 1:1].”<sup>16</sup> In other words, there is every reason that the verse should be translated “the Word was God,” and no sound reason that it should be translated otherwise – except of course, out of a pure and simple bias. Such is the case with the Jehovah’s Witnesses. In their *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, the author, even after admitting that Colwell’s rule applies to *John* 1:1, still maintains that the translation should be with the indefinite article “a.” The reason given is that “the testimony of the entire Bible is that Jesus is not Almighty God.”<sup>17</sup> This is as clear a case of question begging as one could expect to find.

### Son of God

---

<sup>15</sup> John Murray, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), II:248.

<sup>16</sup> See Gordon H. Clark, *The Johannine Logos*, 22. See also John Wenham, *The Elements of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 35.

<sup>17</sup> *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* (Anonymous, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989), 28.

When the New Testament writers refer to Jesus as the Son of God (e.g., *John* 1:49; 10:36), they are ascribing deity to Him. As we read in *John* 5:18, Jesus’ Jewish contemporaries clearly understood that when Jesus said that God was His Father, He was “making Himself equal to God.” In His trial before the high priest, when asked “are You the Christ, the Son of God” (*Matthew* 26:63), Jesus replied in the affirmative (verse 64). The judges, recognizing this claim to ontic deity, found Him guilty of blasphemy, and sentenced him to death in accordance with *Leviticus* 24:16 (verses 65-66).

Jesus, as the Son of God, is not ontologically subordinate to the Father.<sup>18</sup> His Sonship is an intratrinitarian relationship, which denotes an essential oneness with the Father. Sometimes the New Testament refers to Christ as the “only begotten” (*monogenes*) of the Father (*John* 1:14,18; 3:16). But the word *monogenes*, which is derived from two Greek words – *mono* (one) and *genos* (kind) – means “one of a kind,” and has to do with Christ’s “uniqueness.” It does not imply that Jesus, as the Second Person of the Trinity, was ever created or born, or that in any sense He is ontologically subordinate to the Father. As B. B. Warfield writes: “The adjective ‘only begotten’ conveys the idea, not of derivation and subordination, but of uniqueness and consubstantiality: Jesus is all that God is, and He alone is this.”<sup>19</sup>

As the only begotten Son of the Father, then, Jesus is unique. Christians are likewise sons and daughters of God the Father, but they are adopted children (*Romans* 8:14-16; *Galatians* 4:4-6). In *John* 20:17, Jesus makes a distinction between His relationship with the Father and His disciples’

---

<sup>18</sup> This will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter under “The Work of Christ.”

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 194.

relationship with the Father: “I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.”

### **Jesus Christ: One Person and Two Natures**

According to the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), which is considered by a number of theologians to be “the standard for Christological orthodoxy,”<sup>20</sup> Jesus Christ is:

Truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to His manhood; in all things like unto us without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, only begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The substance of the Chalcedonian creedal statement is summarized by the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Q 21-22) as follows:

The only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continues to

be, God and man, by taking to Himself a true body, and a reasonable [rational] soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.

The Council of Chalcedon and the *Shorter Catechism* both claim that Jesus Christ is the God-man. He is one Person with two distinct natures. He is fully God and fully man; yet there is no fusion of the natures. The two natures must be distinguished, but never separated. First we will study the two natures. Then we will consider the unity of the Person.

### **The Divine Nature**

In the history of the church, there have always been those who have denied Christ’s deity. The second century Ebionites, likely an offshoot of the Judaizer movement, which Paul denounces in his letter to the *Galatians*, maintained that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary, thus affirming His human nature. But the Ebionites denied that Jesus was divine. The fourth century Arians also rejected the eternity of Jesus as the *Logos*. Distorting passages such as *Proverbs* 8:22, *Romans* 8:29, and *Colossians* 1:15, Arius claimed that Christ was begotten, therefore He must have had a beginning. Said Arius, Christ was the greatest of all of God’s creatures, and He was created before the remainder of creation, and He had a divine nature that was similar to that of God’s, but it was not the same as God’s. Arianism was condemned as heretical at the Council of Nicea (325). The present day Jehovah’s Witnesses are a modern form of Arianism.

In the nineteenth century men such as Ernest Renan and David Strauss were instrumental in initiating the movement which has come to be known as “the quest for the historical Jesus.” Denying that the Gospels give us an accurate account of the true teachings of Jesus Christ, these schol-

<sup>20</sup> J. H. Hall, “Council of Chalcedon,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 204.

ars thought it necessary to get beyond the text of Scripture, a text filled with myth and folklore, and find the historical Jesus. Increasingly, the “real Jesus” was depicted as a good teacher of spiritual principles, but certainly not the Second Person of the Trinity.

Interestingly, it was the liberal Albert Schweitzer who took the steam out of this movement when he wrote his *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.<sup>21</sup> Schweitzer demonstrated that the historical Jesus, as formulated by these earlier scholars, is simply a product of their modernist presuppositions. One cannot rationally separate the historical Jesus from the Jesus of the Gospels.

Other twentieth century scholars, such as Rudolf Bultmann and his demythologized Jesus,<sup>22</sup> and the authors of *The Myth of God Incarnate*,<sup>23</sup> have continued this assault on the divine nature of Jesus Christ. Then too there are those in the higher critical school that formed what is known as the Jesus Seminar. The purpose of this alliance was to resurrect the search for the historical Jesus. The result of the findings of the scholars involved in this movement has been published in *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*.<sup>24</sup> The conclusion of the Jesus Seminar is that Jesus Christ is not eternal deity.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

<sup>22</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology,” in *Kerygma and Myth*, edited by Hans Bartsch (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 1-44.

<sup>23</sup> John Hick, editor, *The Myth of God Incarnate* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977).

<sup>24</sup> Robert W. Funk, et al., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

<sup>25</sup> For more on the Jesus Seminar, see W. Gary Crampton, “Blackballing Jesus,” *The Trinity Review*, edited by John W. Robbins (Trinity Foundation, July 1995).

B. B. Warfield correctly evaluates the whole of liberal thinking in its quest to find the historical Jesus: “It is the desupernaturalized Jesus which is the mythical Jesus, who never had any existence, the postulation of the existence of whom explains nothing and leaves the whole historical development hanging in the air.”<sup>26</sup>

In agreement with Warfield, and contrary to the denials of Christ’s deity, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (8:2) teaches the Biblical view that Jesus Christ is “the Son of God, the Second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father.” The Bible is replete with passages that support this position. We have already seen that the Christological titles “Christ,” “Lord,” “Son of Man,” “Son of David,” “Word of God,” “God,” and “Son of God,” along with the “I AM” sayings found in the *Gospel of John*, all affirm Christ’s divine nature.

The pre-existence of the Second Person of the Trinity is clearly taught in passages such as *John* 1:1 (“In the beginning was the Word”), *John* 3:13 (“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven”), and *John* 3:31 (“He [Christ] who comes from above is above all”). John the Baptist claimed that even though he was born before Jesus, nevertheless, as the Second Person of the Trinity, “He [Christ] was before me” (*John* 1:15,30); that is, He pre-existed John. And, we are told, that as pre-existent deity, Christ is both the Creator (*John* 1:3; *Colossians* 1:16; *Hebrews* 1:2) and providential Sustainer (*Colossians* 1:17; *Hebrews* 1:3) of the universe.

In the Old Testament, there are a number of passages which speak about the “Angel of the Lord,” where it is very clear that the

---

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, edited by Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950), 22.

Angel is a manifestation of God Himself. He both identifies Himself as God and exercises divine prerogatives (*Genesis* 16:7-13; 18:1-21; 19:1-21; 22:11-18; *Exodus* 3:2; *Judges* 2:1-4; 6:11-22; *2 Samuel* 24:16). Yet, at the same time, the Angel is distinguished from the Lord (*Genesis* 48:15-16; *Exodus* 23:20-23; *Zechariah* 1:12-13). What we have here is a “Christophany,” a manifestation of the pre-incarnate Second Person of the Trinity. As Reymond maintains: “The Biblical data suggests accordingly that the Angel, as a divine Person, was uncreated.”<sup>27</sup>

Likewise, *Isaiah* 9:6 and *Micah* 5:2 prophesy of the coming of the Messiah, who is said to be “eternal.” Isaiah’s prophecy is especially strong, as it claims that the coming Messiah is “the Mighty God.” The New Testament reveals that both of these Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in Christ, thus affirming His deity (*Luke* 2:11; *John* 3:16; *Ephesians* 2:14; *Titus* 2:13; *Matthew* 2:1-12).

A number of other Old Testament prophecies reveal the divine nature of the coming Messiah. *Psalms* 2 teaches about the coming of an enthroned Son, who is equal with the Father. *Hebrews* 1:5, *Acts* 4:25-26 and 13:33 tell us that this Son is Jesus Christ. *Psalms* 45 speaks about a divine King and Bridegroom. *Hebrews* 1:8-9 tell us that this is Christ. *Psalms* 102 refers to the creative activities of the eternal God. *Hebrews* 1:10-12 tell us that this has reference to Jesus Christ. *Psalms* 110 teaches us about a Lordly Priest and King. *Matthew* 22:41-45, *Hebrews* 1:3,13 and 5:6,10 tell us that this is Christ. And in *Malachi* 3-4 we are told about the coming of the divine Messenger of the covenant. *Mark* 1:2 tells us that this is also the Second Person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ.

The divine nature of Jesus Christ is revealed in various other ways. As we have seen, He is the Creator (*John* 1:1; *Colossians* 1:16; *Hebrews* 1:2) and providential Sustainer (*Colossians* 1:17; *Hebrews* 1:3) of the universe. He forgives sins (*Mark* 2:1-12). He has universal power and authority (*Matthew* 28:18; *Ephesians* 1:22). He raises the dead (*John* 11:38-44). He has the power and authority to grant eternal life (*Matthew* 11:25-27; *John* 5:26; 6:63). He is the object of worship (*Matthew* 28:16; *John* 20:28; *Acts* 7:59). He performed miracles “which no one else did” (*John* 15:24) – miracles that “manifested His glory [i.e., His deity]” (*John* 2:11), and He gave authority to others to perform miracles as well (*Matthew* 10:1-8). All of these revelations of Christ’s power and authority speak to His divine nature.

The New Testament also teaches that Jesus Christ possesses divine attributes. He demonstrated His *omnipotence* and *sovereignty* by creating and (continually) sustaining the universe (*Colossians* 1:16-17), by stilling a storm at sea (*Mark* 4:35-41), by walking on the water (*Matthew* 14:22-33), by changing water into wine (*John* 2:1-11), and raising the dead (*John* 11:38-44). He taught that He is *eternal* in the “I AM” statements studied above, and it is further confirmed in *Hebrews* 1:10-12. He demonstrated His *omniscience* by knowing the thoughts of people (*Mark* 2:8; *John* 1:48; 2:25), by knowing “from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him” (*John* 6:64), by proclaiming that He has a knowledge equal with that of God the Father (*Matthew* 11:25-27), and by acknowledging the claim of His disciples that “You know all things” (*John* 16:30; 21:17). Jesus demonstrated His *omnipresence* by affirming that He would always be with His church (*Matthew* 18:20; 28:20). And the *immutability* of God the Son is taught in *Hebrews* 13:8: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

---

<sup>27</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The Old Testament Witness* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1990), 6.



Finally, we are taught in the *Gospel of John* that Jesus Christ, who is the Word of God incarnate (1:1,14), is “one” in essence<sup>28</sup> with the Father (10:30), is given the same honor as the Father (5:23), is to be trusted and believed in just as the Father is trusted and believed in (14:1), manifests God’s name in His Person (17:6), reveals God’s work in His work (17:4), and reveals God’s words in His words (12:44-50; 17:8). According to Scripture, Jesus Christ is fully divine.

### The Human Nature

Just as in the history of the church there have always been those who deny the genuine deity of Jesus Christ, so also there have always been those who deny His genuine humanity, thereby obviating not only His incarnation, but also His crucifixion, His bodily resurrection and His ascension. In the first century a form of Gnosticism known as Docetism (from the Greek verb *dokeo*, “to seem or appear”) emerged. This view held that it would be evil for God to take upon Himself a human nature, because the physical world itself is sinful. Thus, it only “seems or appears” that Christ had a human body. The apostle John spoke against Docetism in *1 John* 4:1-6.

Then in the fourth century, Apollinaris, a trichotomist,<sup>29</sup> taught that Christ had a human body and a human soul, but His human spirit had been displaced by the divine *Logos*. This, of course, makes Christ less than human. This view was condemned at the Council of Constantinople (381).

---

<sup>28</sup> The cardinal numeral “one” (*hen*) used in *John* 10:30 is neuter, thereby precluding the meaning that the Father and the Son are one Person.

<sup>29</sup> Simplistically stated, trichotomy is the errant belief that man consists of three parts: body, soul, and spirit. Dichotomy, on the other hand, is the proper belief that man consists of two parts: body and soul or spirit.

Notwithstanding these false teachings, the *Confession* (8:2) states that the Second Person of the Trinity “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.”

The human nature of Jesus Christ is manifested in a number of ways in the New Testament. *Matthew* (1:18-25) and *Luke* (1:26-38) inform us, in the words of the *Confession*, that “when the fullness of time was come,” Christ was “conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance.” This, according to *Matthew* 1:23, was in fulfillment of *Isaiah* 7:14: “Behold, a virgin will be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel.” It is not that the Son of God became a man in the sense of giving up His deity. Rather, as the *Confession* says, the Second Person did “take upon Him man’s nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin” (see *John* 1:14; *Hebrews* 4:15).

Jesus calls Himself a man in *John* 8:40, and he is called a man by others numerous times (*Mark* 14:71; *Luke* 23:4; *John* 4:29; 5:12; 10:33; *1 Timothy* 2:5). The author of *Hebrews* is very clear when he writes that “inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He [Christ] Himself likewise shared in the same....Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren” (2:14,17). Further, Jesus human ancestry is traced both in *Matthew* 1:1-17 (back to Abraham) and *Luke* 3:23-37 (back to Adam). Then in *Matthew* 26:26,38 and *Luke* 23:46 we read that Jesus Christ had a human soul. Thus, we learn from these verses, as the *Shorter Catechism* (Q 22) teaches, that “Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to Himself

a true body, and a reasonable [rational] soul.”

Moreover, in *Luke 2:52* we read that Jesus Christ went through a period of human development, in that He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” The Bible teaches us that Jesus had human needs, such as food (*Matthew 4:2*), drink (*John 4:7*), and sleep (*Mark 4:38*). We are also told that Jesus suffered as “He learned obedience” (*Hebrews 5:8*). He grew weary (*John 4:6*), and He had human blood in His veins (*John 19:34; Hebrews 2:14*).

In *James 1:13* we are taught that God cannot be tempted. But in *Matthew 4:1-11* and *Hebrews 2:17-18*, we are told that Jesus was tempted. Obviously, then, this temptation had to do with His human rather than His divine nature. Further, Scripture teaches that God is omniscient (*Acts 15:18; 1 John 3:20*), but in *Mark 13:32* we read that the Son does not know the time of the second advent – an obvious reference to His humanity. The Bible also teaches that God is the law giver (*Isaiah 33:22; James 4:12*), and therefore He is above the law: “He does whatever He pleases” (*Psalms 115:3; 135:6*). But Christ as a human being, “was born under [subject to] the law” (*Galatians 4:4*).

Then too, we know that God, being immutable, does not emote. As the *Confession* (2:2) states: He is “without body, parts, or passions.” Yet Jesus, as a human being, did emote. For example, He expressed irritation or indignation (*Mark 10:14*), He grieved (*Mark 3:5*), He was perplexed, distressed, and troubled (*Mark 14:34; John 12:27*), and He expressed astonishment or marvel (*Mark 6:6; Luke 7:9*).

Other evidences of Jesus’ genuine humanity are seen in that He “spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva” (*John 9:6*). He wept over the death of Lazarus (*John 11:35*). He had a crown of thorns “put on His head” and was “struck...with [the] hands” of the Jewish leaders (*John 19:2-3*).

And while Jesus was on the cross, “one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out” (*John 19:34*). Finally, Jesus died (*Mark 15:44-46*). But even after the resurrection, He revealed His wounds to His disciples (*John 20:20,27*). On several occasions He ate with them (*Luke 24:28-43; John 21:9-14*). And He showed His disciples His hands and feet, and enjoined them to “handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (*Luke 24:39*). Then as a human being, Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father (*Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11*).

It is important to note here that even after the ascension, Jesus Christ remains both God and man. As the *Larger Catechism* (Q 36) teaches: “Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father, in the fullness of time became man, and so was and *continues to be* God and man, in two entire distinct natures, and one Person for ever.” This is confirmed by Paul when he writes: “For in Him [Christ] *continually dwells*<sup>30</sup> all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” And in *Philippians 3:20-21*, the apostle teaches that Christ is even now at the Father’s right hand in bodily form, and at His second coming “will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body.” Then too, after Jesus’ ascension, Stephen “gazed into heaven and saw...the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (*Acts 7:55-56*). And the apostle John, having seen the ascended Christ as “the Son of Man,” clothed in His priestly garments, “fell down at His feet as dead” (*Revelation 1:12-17*).

---

<sup>30</sup> In *Colossians 2:9* the apostle uses the present tense of the Greek verb *katoikeo* (“to dwell”), stressing the fact that the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ are “continually” and inseparably united in hypostatic union. This union will be further discussed below.

This in no way is to imply that Jesus' human nature is a part of the Trinity. It is not. His humanity is as much a part of God's creation as is the rest of mankind's. What is unique about the human Jesus is that He is without sin. This truth is frequently witnessed to in the New Testament. Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit, thereby avoiding the corrupt nature which He would have otherwise inherited through Adam's seed (*Luke* 1:35). And throughout His life He remained "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (*Hebrews* 7:26). He was the lamb of God, "without blemish and without spot" (*1 Peter* 1:19). Even though He "was in all points tempted as we are, yet [He remained] without sin" (*Hebrews* 4:15). And when He suffered on behalf of His elect, He "committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth" (*1 Peter* 2:21-22). Hence, God the Father "made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us [the elect], that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (*2 Corinthians* 5:21).

Further, the Bible teaches that for Jesus Christ to be the Savior of His church, it is essential that He be both God and man. The *Larger Catechism* (Q 38-40) explains:

It was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that He might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death; give worth and efficacy to His sufferings, obedience, and intercession; and to satisfy God's justice, procure His favor, purchase a peculiar people, give His Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation.

It was requisite that the Mediator should be man, that He might advance our nature, perform obedience to the law, suffer and

make intercession for us in our nature, have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities; that we might receive the adoption of sons, and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace.

It was requisite that the Mediator, who was to reconcile God and man, should Himself be both God and man, and this in one Person, that the proper works of each nature might be accepted of God for us, and relied on by us, as the works of the whole Person.

### **The Unity of the Person**

As we have seen, throughout church history, there have always been those who have denied Christ's deity and those who have denied His humanity. It is also the case that there have always been those who have denied the Biblical view of the unity of the two natures in one Person. Rather than merely distinguishing between the two natures of Christ, the fifth century Nestorians<sup>31</sup> divided Christ into two separate persons. Nestorianism was condemned at the Council of Ephesus (431). The fifth century Eutychians, on the other hand, averred that after the incarnation there was only one nature in Christ. This nature was neither fully human nor fully divine. Rather, the union produced a mingling of the two natures into a mixed third nature, a *tertium quid*. This view, which is also known as *monophysitism* ("one nature"), was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451).

The Biblical view of the unity of the Person of Christ is taught in the *Westminster Confession* (8:2), which states of Christ that "two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one Person,

---

<sup>31</sup> Nestorianism is named for the founder of this movement, Nestorius, although it is disputed as to whether or not Nestorius fully endorsed the view espoused by his followers.

without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which Person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.”

Theologians call the union of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ in the one Person the hypostatic union. At the incarnation, as taught by the *Confession*, the eternal Son of God took upon Himself a true human nature. From that time, Jesus Christ is, and always will be, one Person (that is, one God-man), with two self-conscious natures: one divine and one human.

But here is where a difficulty arises. The Chalcedonian creedal statement, quoted above, along with much of mainline “Christianity,” has a different view. This view maintains that from the time of the incarnation, the Second Person of the Godhead is one *divine* Person with two natures: one divine and one human. Louis Berkhof, an advocate of this view, explains: “There is but one Person in the Mediator, and that Person is the unchangeable Son of God. In the incarnation He did not change into a human person, nor did he adopt a human person; He simply assumed a human nature, which did not develop into a human personality, but became personal in the Person of the Son. The one divine Person, who possessed a divine nature from eternity, assumed a human nature and now has both.”<sup>32</sup> Augustus Strong is in agreement with Berkhof. He concludes that the one divine Person assumed an impersonal human nature. In other words, He did not unite Himself with a human person, but with a human nature “without personality.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 184.

<sup>33</sup> Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, three volumes in one (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1907, 1985), II:692-693.

In this view, the one Person is not the God-man, but the Second Person of the Godhead. The difficulty, then, is that if Jesus Christ has two complete natures, one fully divine and one fully human, and yet is one undivided divine Person, how can that Person be said to be genuinely human? That is, if Jesus Christ is, as taught in *Hebrews* 2:17, and asserted by the Chalcedonian creedal statement, “in all things like unto us,” how is He not a human person? If He, as Chalcedon properly contends, did take upon Himself a human nature so that, “according to the manhood,” He is “in all things like unto us,” then He had a human body and a human soul. Is He not then a human person? After all, the Bible repeatedly claims that He is not just a human nature; He is “the *man* Christ Jesus” (*1 Timothy* 2:5).

Moreover, if the self-conscious Person of the God-man is the Second Person of the Trinity, as much of mainline “Christianity” affirms, then the human nature would not be self-conscious. Yet, in *Luke* 2:52 we read that Jesus increased, not only in “stature” (i.e., physically), but also “in wisdom” (i.e., mentally), thus showing that Jesus’ human nature (for the divine nature being omniscient cannot increase) has a consciousness. But if the God-man has two consciousnesses, then He is two persons: divine and human.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Publisher’s Note: Undoubtedly this is one of the most difficult, yet most sublime, of all the doctrines of the Christian religion. While the *Blue Banner* specifically denies a Nestorian explanation of the Personhood of Christ, it must also be admitted that much modern explanation of the Chalcedonian Creed is also deficient. We find much of the modern explanation of the term “human nature” to be ambiguous at best. As the *Shorter Catechism* (Q 22) clearly teaches, Christ had a true body and a reasonable soul. Another way of saying this is that Christ had everything that is involved in being human.

This was the matter with which Nestorius wrestled. And, as Thomas Morris points out, other early Christian thinkers, such as Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330-395), Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389), and Cyril of Alexandria (died 444), had also seen this problem. They did not go so far as the Nestorians by claiming that Christ was two separate persons. But they did hold to what Morris calls “the two mind view of Christ.”<sup>35</sup> It is irrational, so these scholars said, to maintain that the God-man has only one divine self-consciousness. If this were the case, He could not be fully man.

The responses to this problem have been abysmal. Sadly, one typical way of alleviating the difficulty has been the Kierkegaardian approach: place it in the realm of logical paradox. Another solution is to discard the Biblical teaching that God is impassible, and to suggest that the Second Person of the Godhead actually suffered on the cross.

These, of course, are no real solutions at all. In the final book that he wrote, *The Incarnation*,<sup>36</sup> Gordon Clark attempted to answer this conundrum. According to Dr. Clark, “the fatal flaw” in this matter is the absence of definitions. How does the Chalcedonian creed, and how do others, define “person?” How is “nature” defined? Herein lies the difficulty.<sup>37</sup> Apparently, when the early theologians were formulating the doctrine of the incarnation, the terms used were somewhat ambiguous. But we must guard against any alleged solution that does not render the full humanity of Jesus Christ. And to speak of Christ’s humanity as an impersonal human nature (if there is such a thing), which becomes personal in the incarnation, does not solve

the problem. Further, if the human nature becomes personal in the Person of the Son, then He is a human person.

Dr. Clark asks some very relevant questions: “If Jesus was not a human person, who or what suffered on the cross? The Second Person [of the Trinity] could not have suffered, for deity is impassible....If then the Second Person could not suffer, could [an impersonal human] nature suffer?”<sup>38</sup>

Dr. Clark continues: “On the contrary, only...a person can suffer.” Moreover, he ponders, since the Bible teaches us that Christ possessed a human consciousness, mind, and heart, and will, how can He not be a human person? Is it possible for “a man to be a man without being a human person?” Is the salvation of the elect accomplished “by the alleged death of an impersonal [human] nature?” No, says Clark, “the one who died on the cross was a man, He had or was a soul, He was a human being, a Person.”<sup>39</sup>

John Murray, an advocate of the Chalcedonian view, has nevertheless also seen the difficulty with “definitions.” He writes:

It may be that the term “Person” can be given a connotation in our modern context, and applied to Christ’s human nature, without thereby impinging upon the oneness of His divine-human Person. In other words, the term “nature” may be too abstract to express all that belongs to His humanness and the term “Person” is necessary to express the manhood that is truly and properly His.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Thomas V. Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 102-103.

<sup>36</sup> Gordon H. Clark, *The Incarnation* (Trinity Foundation, 1988).

<sup>37</sup> Clark, *The Incarnation*, 15-17.

---

<sup>38</sup> Clark, *The Incarnation*, 67.

<sup>39</sup> Clark, *The Incarnation*, 67-70.

<sup>40</sup> John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), II:138.

The present writer is in agreement with Clark and Murray on this point. It seems best, if we are going to retain the classic language on this subject (i.e., Person and nature), to say with the *Westminster Confession* (8:2) that Jesus Christ possesses “two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood,” that is that He is fully God and fully man. And that in the incarnation these two natures “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.” That is, there is one Lord Jesus Christ, one God-man (i.e., the one Person), who possesses two distinct and inseparable natures, both of which are to be considered “personal,” in that He is fully divine and fully human. There is nothing impersonal about the divine or the human natures. Otherwise Jesus Christ could not be fully God nor fully man. As touching His humanity, Christ has a human mind or soul, and a human body. He is “the *Man* Christ Jesus” (1 *Timothy* 2:5).

It is also important to point out that at the time of the incarnation the divine nature of Jesus Christ, being immutable, could not and did not undergo any change. He did not set aside any of His divine attributes when He took upon Himself a human nature. In fact, He could not have done so and remained divine. As Wayne Grudem avers, “no recognized teacher in the first 1800 years of church history...[believed] that the Son of God [at the incarnation] gave up some of His divine attributes.”<sup>41</sup>

In the nineteenth century, however modernist theologians developed what is known as “kenotic theology,” from the Greek verb *kenoo* (“to empty”) which Paul

uses in *Philippians* 2:7, where he writes that Jesus Christ “emptied Himself.” The theory is that at the incarnation, Jesus Christ “emptied” or divested Himself of (at least some of) His divine attributes. One of the reasons the modernists advanced this theory is that if it could be shown that Christ laid aside His omniscience, then it is easy to explain why He erred when He taught that the Bible is the infallible, inerrant Word of God.

This however is not what Paul teaches. As Robert Reymond<sup>42</sup> has convincingly argued, what the apostle is saying is that Christ “emptied Himself” after He had taken upon Himself “the form of a servant” (*Philippians* 2:7),<sup>43</sup> by going to the cross (verse 8). The action referred to in Jesus’ “having taken the form of a servant” is antecedent to His emptying Himself in His redemptive cross work. The Second Person of the Godhead, then, did not lay aside any divine attributes at the time of the incarnation. As noted, such is not possible, for He would have ceased being God. Rather, at the incarnation, Christ added something: a human nature.

Or said another way, the Son of God, during His earthly ministry, never ceased being fully divine. He continued to exercise all of His divine attributes. Being immutable, He could not do otherwise. As John Calvin writes:

The Son of God descended from heaven in such a way that, without leaving heaven, He willed to be born in the virgin’s womb, to go about the earth, and to hang upon the cross; yet He continuously filled the world even as He had done from the be-

<sup>41</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 550.

<sup>42</sup> Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New Testament Witness*, 251-266.

<sup>43</sup> The verb form, *labon*, used by Paul in *Philippians* 2:7 is an aorist participle, and should be translated: ‘having taken the form of a servant.’

ginning.<sup>44</sup>

### **The Communication of Attributes**

One of the effects of the hypostatic union is that of the “communication of attributes” (*communicatio idiomatum*). This means that whatever can be attributed to either the divine nature or the human nature of Christ is attributed to the one Person. Whatever is true of either nature is true of the Person. As stated by the *Confession* (8:7):

Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet, by reason of the unity of the Person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the Person denominated by the other nature.

For example, the Bible speaks of Jesus Christ, the God-man, sleeping in the back of a boat (*Mark* 4:38), whereas Scripture tells us that God “neither slumbers nor sleeps” (*Psalms* 121:4). Likewise, *Acts* 20:28 refers to the blood of God which was shed on the cross. But God, who is pure spirit (*John* 4:24), does not have blood (*Luke* 24:39). In each of these cases it is the humanity of Christ that is referenced, but what is said about Him is attributed to the Person (i.e., the God-man).

This Reformed view of the communication of attributes is substantially different from that view held by the Lutheran Church. According to Lutheranism, because of the incarnation, although the divine nature is not limited by the human nature, nevertheless, some of the divine attributes are communicated to the humanity of Christ. In this way, Jesus Christ can in some way be physically present at the Lord’s supper “in, with, and under” the bread and wine. His human nature, in this sense, is ubiqui-

tous. The danger of this view should be obvious. An ubiquitous human is a contradiction. The Lutheran doctrine virtually deifies the human nature of Christ and implicitly denies His genuine humanity.

### **The States of Christ**

When studying the subject of the Person of Christ, it is customary for Reformed theologians to speak of the “states of Christ.” This has to do with the Mediator’s relationship to the law of God. Christ, the Second Person of the Godhead, as the divine lawgiver (*Isaiah* 33:22; *James* 4:12), is not under the law. That is, He is not subject to the law Himself. As eternal deity, “He does whatever He pleases” (*Psalms* 115:3; 135:6). But in the incarnation, the Second Person of the Trinity took upon Himself a human nature and came under the law (*Galatians* 4:4). That is, during the time of His humiliation, Christ was a servant under the law. In His state of exaltation, however, this is not the case. He is no longer obligated to obey the law. This doctrine is well expressed in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Q 27-28):

Christ’s humiliation consisted in His being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

Christ’s exaltation consists in His rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming again to judge the world at the last day.

### **The State of Humiliation**

Jesus’ state of humiliation began at the incarnation (His conception and birth). He assumed a human nature “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (*Romans* 8:3). At this time He became a servant under the law (*Galatians* 4:4), which law He perfectly fulfilled

---

<sup>44</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* II:13:4.

during His earthly ministry (*Matthew* 5:17; *Romans* 5:19). Jesus Christ suffered throughout the entirety of His life on earth. He underwent assaults from Satan (*Matthew* 4:1-11), and the hatred of His fellow man (*John* 8:30-59; 11:45-54). Then too, Jesus experienced the ordinary sufferings of humanity: He grew weary (*John* 4:6), He grew hungry (*Matthew* 4:2), He became thirsty (*John* 19:19:28), and He was lonely (*Matthew* 26:56). Jesus was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (*Isaiah* 53:3). During this time Jesus “learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (*Hebrews* 5:8), thus making Him a sympathetic Savior (*Hebrews* 2:18; 4:15).

Jesus’ suffering, of course, reached its zenith on the cross. In His death, Jesus became sin for the elect (*2 Corinthians* 5:21), suffering the curse of the law in their behalf (*Galatians* 3:13). As the *Larger Catechism* (Q 49) teaches:

Christ humbled Himself in His death, in that having been betrayed by Judas, forsaken by His disciples, scorned and rejected by the world, condemned by [Pontius] Pilate, and tormented by His persecutors; having also conflicted with the terrors of death, and the powers of darkness, felt and borne the weight of God’s wrath, He laid down His life an offering for sin, enduring the painful, shameful, and cursed death of the cross.

The final stage of Christ’s state of humiliation was His burial. The suffering was completed on the cross (*John* 19:30), but He had yet to complete the death-burial complex as per the Old Testament prophecies (*Isaiah* 53:9; *Psalms* 16:10, compare *Acts* 2:27-31; 13:34-35). Says the *Larger Catechism* (Q 50): “Christ’s humiliation after His death consisted in His being buried, and continuing under the power of death till the third day; which has been

otherwise expressed in these words, ‘He descended into hell.’”<sup>45</sup>

### The State of Exaltation

The first phase of Christ’s state of exaltation was, as the *Larger Catechism* (Q 52) states, the resurrection: “Christ was exalted in His resurrection, in that, not having seen corruption in death (of which it was not possible for Him to be held), and having the very same body in which He suffered, with the essential properties thereof (but without mortality, and other common infirmities belonging to this life), really united to His soul, He rose again from the dead the third day.” At this point Jesus Christ “was declared to be the Son of God with power” (*Romans* 1:4).

At the resurrection, the Father fully vindicated His Son (*Acts* 17:31), as “Lord of both the dead and the living” (*Romans* 14:9), and Head of the church (*Ephesians* 1:20-23). Christ’s victory was proclaimed to the whole world. Death and sin have been defeated (*2 Timothy* 1:10; *Hebrews* 2:14). Divine justice has been satisfied (*Romans* 8:34). Further, Christ’s resurrection body was no longer subject to weakness, suffering, and death (*Romans* 6:9-10; *1 Corinthians* 15:42-44; *Philippians* 3:20-21). Apart from Christ’s resurrection, the Christian’s hope is vanquished (*1 Corinthians* 15:12-19). His resurrection is a central part of the Gospel message (*1 Corin-*

---

<sup>45</sup> The statement “He descended into hell” is found in the Apostles’ Creed. And the Westminster Assembly correctly teaches its meaning. The *Heidelberg Catechism* (Q 44) agrees, when it asks: “Why is it added: He descended into hell? Answer: That in my greatest temptations I may be assured that Christ, my Lord, by His inexpressible anguish, pains, and terrors which He suffered in His soul on the cross and before, has redeemed me from the anguish and torment of hell.” In other words, according to Reformed theology, the myth that Jesus Christ descended to the *limbus patrum* (the place of the dead saints of the Old Testament) to free the prisoners is without Biblical support.



*thians* 15:3-4). It guarantees the final resurrection of all of the elect (*1 Corinthians* 15:20-23).

It is important to note that Christ's resurrection has more than a mere personal significance. It is cosmic in scope. In *1 Corinthians* 15:20-58, Paul argues that Jesus' resurrection is, in a very real sense, the counterpart of creation. Richard Gaffin explains:

The resurrection of Christ is the beginning of the new and final world order, an order described as spiritual and heavenly. It is the dawn of the new creation, the start of the eschatological age. In terms of the conceptual framework with which Paul views the whole of history, it is the commencement of the age-to-come.<sup>46</sup>

The second phase of Christ's state of exaltation is His ascension. Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus was "taken up" to the Father (*Luke* 24:50-53; *Acts* 1:1-11). There He took His rightful place at the right hand of God (*Acts* 2:29-36; *Ephesians* 1:20-22; *Hebrews* 1:3). Theologians refer to this as "the session." At the Father's right hand, Christ intercedes in behalf of the saints in His ongoing priestly ministry (*Romans* 8:34; *Hebrews* 7:25). From His heavenly throne, Jesus Christ rules the universe as King of kings and Lord of lords (*Revelation* 1:5; 19:16; *Acts* 2:29-36; *Ephesians* 1:19-23). Reymond concludes:

In sum, the ascension meant for the Son, as the divine-human Messiah, the assumption of the prerogatives of the Messianic investiture on a universal scale, rights which were already His by right of nature as God the Son, but which He "won" or was

"awarded" as the incarnate Son for fulfilling the obligations pertaining to the estate of humiliation intrinsic to the Messianic investiture.<sup>47</sup>

The final phase of Christ's state of exaltation will occur at the second advent. According to the *Larger Catechism* (Q 56):

Christ is to be exalted in His coming again to judge the world, in that He, who was unjustly judged and condemned by wicked men, shall come again at the last day in great power, and in the full manifestation of His own glory, and of His Father's, with all His holy angels, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, to judge the world in righteousness.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **The Work of Christ**

We now turn our attention to the work of Christ. What does He do? What is His function? To properly understand the work of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, it is important that we first consider the Biblical distinction between the ontological and the economical Trinity.

#### **The Trinity**

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (2:3) synthesizes the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity as follows: "In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance [essence], power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."

<sup>46</sup> Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978), 89-90.

<sup>47</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 581.

In this statement we have three major teachings regarding the ontological Trinity: (1) there is one living and true God who exists eternally in three Persons; (2) all three Persons are equally divine; (3) each of the three Persons has distinguishing properties.

Christianity is both monotheistic and trinitarian. Monotheism is the doctrine, as taught in the *Shorter Catechism* (Q 5), that “there is but one only, the living and true God.” In *Deuteronomy* 6:4 we read: “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.”

There is a unity within the Godhead: oneness, but there is also a plurality: threeness. This does not mean that God is one and three in the same sense; that would be contradictory. God is one in one sense: essence, and three in another sense: Persons. This is unique to Christianity. Judaism and Islam are both monotheistic, but neither is trinitarian. In the Christian doctrine, the oneness of God and the threeness of God are both true and essential to Christianity. As the *Shorter Catechism* (Q 6) states: “There are three Persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

And each Person, as the *Catechism* (Q 6) goes on to say, is one hundred percent divine: “and these three are one God, the same in substance [essence], equal in power and glory.” That is, each member of the Trinity, ontologically speaking, “is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth” (Q 4).<sup>48</sup>

Each Person of the Godhead, then, is fully divine. But each Person has properties which distinguish Him from the others Persons. The differences between the three are not differences in essence; they are dis-

tinctions within the Trinity. Only the Father can say “I am the Father”; only the Son can say “I am the Son”; and only the Holy Spirit can say “I am the Holy Spirit.” In referring to the other members of the Trinity, the Father can say “He is the Son and He is the Spirit,” but He cannot say “I am the Son” or “I am the Spirit.” In the same manner, the Son can say “He is the Father and He is the Spirit,” but He cannot say “I am the Father” or “I am the Spirit.” And the Holy Spirit can say “He is the Father and He is the Son,” but He cannot say “I am the Father” or “I am the Son.”

Simply stated, that which distinguishes the three members of the Godhead is the eternal paternity of the Father, the eternal Sonship of the Son, and the eternal procession of the Spirit. As noted above, the Westminster Assembly speaks of the distinguishing properties within the Trinity as follows: “The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.”

The history of the church has witnessed two major heresies regarding the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity: modalism (or Sabellianism<sup>49</sup>) and subordinationism. Modalism teaches that God is one in essence and one in Person. There are not three Persons in the Godhead, there are merely three ways of referring to the one Person. Sometimes the Bible calls this Person Father (e.g., when it speaks of creation), sometimes He is called Son (e.g., when it speaks of redemption), and sometimes He is called Holy Spirit (e.g., when it speaks of regeneration and sanctification). The Son and the Spirit are called “modes” of God; hence the name modalism. In modalism

---

<sup>48</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, the body and soul of the incarnate Second Person of the Godhead are not parts of the Trinity.

---

<sup>49</sup> Sabellius (c. 200) was one of the first to teach this erroneous view of the Trinity.

the unity of God is secured, but at the expense of the divine triunity of the Persons.

Subordinationism teaches that there is one God: the Father. The Son and the Spirit are lesser deities, if divine at all. The Son and the Spirit, say the subordinationists, are not eternal beings; thus, they are subordinated to the Father. Modern Unitarianism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and related theologies have developed from the subordinationism taught in the early years of Christianity.

This is not to say that the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity does not recognize an order of economy, or administration, within the Godhead. Here there is a form of subordinationism. This subordination is not in the essence of the members of the Trinity, but in the function or role that each member has. This is referred to as the economic Trinity.<sup>50</sup>

There are Biblical passages which state that the Father sent the Son into the world to accomplish His redemptive work (*Mark* 9:37; *John* 17:3). And there are passages which teach that the Father and the Son sent the Spirit (*John* 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). Likewise, Jesus said: "My Father is greater than I" (*John* 14:28). But these verses do not teach a subordinationism within the ontological Trinity; that is, they say nothing with regard to the divine nature of the members of the Godhead. Rather, these verses teach that within the (economic)

Trinity, each member has functions to perform in redemptive history.

In the work of redemption, for example, the Father is the one who elects (*Ephesians* 1:3-4; *1 Peter* 1:2), the Son is the one who becomes incarnate and accomplishes redemption for the elect (*John* 1:1,14; *Ephesians* 1:7; *1 Peter* 1:2), and the Spirit is the one who applies redemption by regenerating the elect (*John* 3:3-8; *Titus* 3:5-6), and progressively sanctifying them (*2 Corinthians* 3:17-18; *2 Thessalonians* 2:13).

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (8:1,5,8) states it this way:

It pleased God [the Father] in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man...unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, has fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and has purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father has given unto Him.

To all those for whom Christ has purchased redemption, He does certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same; making intercession for them; and revealing unto them, in and by the Word, the mysteries of salvation; effectually persuading them by His Spirit to believe and obey; and governing their hearts by His Word and Spirit; overcoming all their enemies by His almighty power and wisdom, in such

---

<sup>50</sup> Theologians use the word "economic" to describe the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity because the word "economic" carries with it the idea of assigned value instead of value relating to the essence of a thing. "Pricing" arises when various values are assigned, by a buyer and seller, to articles for sale. Thus, the Son may have an "assigned" subordinate position to the Father, and the Spirit may have an "assigned" subordinate position to the Father and to the Son, without introducing the idea that they are essentially separate and inferior to the Father, or the Father and the Son respectively.

manner and ways as are most consonant to His wonderful and unsearchable dispensation.

In this sense, and in this sense only, God the Father is greater than the Son, and the Father and the Son are greater than the Spirit; not in their essence, but in their administrative order or economy.

As studied above, when the *Westminster Confession* (2:3) claims that “The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son,” it has reference to the eternal relationship that exists between the members of the Trinity. That is, just as the Father has always been the Father, so also the Son has always been the Son, and the Holy Spirit has always been the Holy Spirit.

Sadly, however, there is another way that theologians have utilized the terminology that we find in the *Confession*, one which was formulated in the Nicene Creed (AD 325), the Creed of Constantinople (AD 381), and the Synod of Toledo (AD 589). The Nicene Creed, for example, says that the Son was eternally begotten or generated “out of the essence of the Father.”<sup>51</sup>

At best, this language is implicitly subordinationistic, and John Calvin strongly contested it, declaring the doctrine of the “eternal generation” of the Son to be “foolish.” As the Second Person of the Godhead, Christ is *autotheos* (“God Himself”).<sup>52</sup> Loraine Boettner also spoke

against the implicit subordinationism in the doctrine of the Son’s “eternal generation.” He remarked:

We prefer to say...that within the essential life of the Trinity no one Person is prior to, nor generated by, nor proceeds from, another, and that such priority and subordination as we find revealed in the works of creation, redemption, and sanctification, related not to the immanent [ontological] but to the economic Trinity.<sup>53</sup>

Simply stated, the concept of the economic Trinity has to do with the works of the triune God outside of Himself (*ad extra*), whereas the concept of the ontological Trinity has to do with the internal works (*ad intra*). Only within the economic Trinity is it permissible to speak of the subordinate roles of the Son to the Father, and the Spirit to the Father and the Son. A proper understanding of this distinction is very necessary in the study of Christology, particularly with regard to Christ’s work. This understanding would also go a long way toward obviating the subordinationism taught in some of the cults (e.g., Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons).

### **The Active and Passive Obedience of Christ**

If we were to summarize the work of Christ in one word, that word would be “obedience.” His entire life’s work was one of obedience. Paul says that “by one Man’s [Christ’s] *obedience* the many [the elect] will be made righteous” (*Romans* 5:19); and that Christ “humbled Himself and became *obedient* to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (*Philippians* 2:8). The author of *Hebrews* claims “though He [Christ] was

---

<sup>51</sup> The Nicene Creed reads: “We believe in one God the Father, Almighty, Creator of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, *from [out of] the essence of the Father (ek tes ousias tou Patros)*. For more on this, see Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 317-341.

<sup>52</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Vols. I & II, Library of the Christian Classics, John T.

---

McNeill, editor, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), I:13:29.

<sup>53</sup> Loraine Boettner, *Studies in Theology* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1947), 123.

a Son, yet He learned *obedience* by the things which He suffered” (5:8).

In the words of Calvin:

Now someone asks, how has Christ abolished sin, banished the separation between us and God, and acquired righteousness to render God favorable and kindly toward us. To this we can in general reply that He has achieved this for us by the whole course of His *obedience*.<sup>54</sup>

Theologians customarily distinguish between Jesus Christ’s “active” or “preceptive” obedience, and His “passive” or “penal” obedience. The active obedience has to do with Christ’s perfectly righteous life, the passive obedience, on the other hand, concerns itself with His suffering.

In His active (or preceptive) obedience, the Lord Jesus Christ lived a life of perfect obedience to the entirety of the law of God (*Matthew* 5:17; *Hebrews* 4:15; 7:26), in order to earn righteousness for the elect (*Romans* 5:19; *1 Corinthians* 1:30; *Philippians* 3:9). As the first Adam broke the covenant of works in the Garden of Eden, bringing all mankind under the curse of sin (*Genesis* 3; *Romans* 5:12-19), the second and last Adam, Jesus Christ (*1 Corinthians* 15:45,47), came to fulfill that covenant in behalf of the elect (*Romans* 5:19). Christ’s active obedience was necessary, in order that His righteousness could be imputed legally to the elect (*2 Corinthians* 5:21).

The passive obedience of Christ’s redemptive cross work itself, apart from the active obedience, is not enough. It is not merely a moral neutrality that one needs from Christ (in that his sins are forgiven), but a positive moral righteousness as well. That is, Christ did more than die for the elect; He also became their righteousness. This is why Paul writes that his goal is “to be

found in Him [Christ], not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (*Philippians* 3:9). Hence we read in *1 Corinthians* 1:30 that “Christ Jesus...became...[our] righteousness.”

In His work of passive (or penal) obedience, the Lord Jesus Christ, by legal imputation, bore the sins of the elect. Christ “Himself,” writes Peter, “bore our sins in His own body on the tree [cross], that we having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed” (*1 Peter* 2:24).

We are not to think that Christ’s suffering on the cross was the totality of His suffering on behalf of His people. In actuality, the entirety of His earthly life was one of suffering for them. In *John* 1:29 we are taught that Jesus Christ is the “Lamb of God who *continually takes away*<sup>55</sup> the sin of the world.” The passive obedience of Christ is summarized in the *Shorter Catechism* (Q 27) as follows: “Christ’s humiliation consisted in His being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross.”<sup>56</sup>

It is due to both the active and passive obedience, then, that double imputation takes place in Christ’s cross work. His righteousness is legally imputed to the elect, and their sins are legally imputed to Him. Paul clearly teaches this in *2 Corinthians* 5:21: “For He [God the Father] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us [the elect], that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

<sup>54</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* II:16:5.

<sup>55</sup> The use of the present tense participle *airon* (taking away) in *John* 1:29, stresses the continual nature of Christ’s “taking away of the sin of the world.”

<sup>56</sup> More will be said on the active and passive obedience of Christ below.

### The Three Offices of Christ

Robert Reymond succinctly and correctly states:

As the Surety of the elect in the eternal plan of salvation, and in fulfillment of God's covenant promises (*Luke* 1:54-55, 68-73; *Romans* 15:8-9; *Galatians* 3:8-9, 13-14), and as the Mediator of the covenant of grace and the only Redeemer of God's elect, the Lord Jesus Christ performed His saving work in their behalf in His threefold office of Prophet (*Deuteronomy* 18:15; *Luke* 4:18-21; 13:33; *Acts* 3:22), Priest (*Psalms* 110:4; *Hebrews* 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:5-6; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1), and King (*Isaiah* 9:6-7; *Psalms* 2:6; 45:6; 110:1-2; *Luke* 1:33; *John* 18:36-37; *Hebrews* 1:8; *2 Peter* 1:11; *Revelation* 19:16).<sup>57</sup>

As Reymond suggests, Reformed theologians usually study the work of Christ under His threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. As seen earlier, the New Testament title "Christ" (*Christos*), which is the equivalent of the Old Testament title "Messiah" (*Mashiach*), means "anointed one." In the Old Testament, prophets (*1 Kings* 19:16; *Psalms* 105:15; *Isaiah* 61:1), priests (*Exodus* 29:7; *Psalms* 133:2), and kings (*1 Samuel* 10:1; 16:13), were anointed to carry out their God-given callings. So also, at His baptism (*Matthew* 3:16-17), Jesus Christ was anointed (*Luke* 4:17-21; *Hebrews* 1:9), to carry out His threefold office calling. To cite the *Shorter Catechism* (Q 23-26):

Christ as our Redeemer, executes the offices of Prophet, of a Priest, and of a King, both in His estate of humiliation and exaltation.

Christ executes the office of a

Prophet, in revealing to us, by His Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.

Christ executes the office of a Priest, in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.

Christ executes the office of a King, in subduing us to Himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies.

### The Office of Prophet

The Bible teaches us that God has revealed Himself to mankind in both general and special revelation. The former, which is given innately to all men *qua* men, is propositional and ineradicable. It is sufficient to reveal something of God to all men, leaving them without excuse for their ignorance, unbelief, and rebellion against God (*Romans* 1:18-21; 2:14-15). Yet, as the *Westminster Confession* (1:1) properly teaches, general revelation is insufficient "to give that knowledge of God and of His will which is necessary unto salvation...which makes the Holy Scripture to be most necessary." Without special revelation, that is, the propositions of God's Word, sinful man is not able to come to a sound or saving knowledge of God. The necessity of special revelation rests on the insufficiency of general revelation.

Jesus Christ, the divine *Logos*, in His role of Prophet, gives us the 66 books of Scripture. The Second Person of the Trinity, as the Angel of the Lord, was the one who revealed the law to Israel on Mount Sinai (*Acts* 7:38). Peter informs us that in the Old Testament era, it was also Christ, by means of His Spirit, who spoke through the prophets (*1 Peter* 1:10-12; 3:18-20). And as we are told by Luke, the entirety of the

<sup>57</sup> Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 623-624.

Old Testament pointed to Christ (*Luke* 24:44).

The function of the Old Testament prophets was both to “foretell” (*Isaiah* 2:2-4; 7:14; 9:6-7), and “forth tell” (*Amos* 1-2) the Word of God. They represented or spoke for God to the people. The Old Testament also foretold the coming of one Prophet, the Messiah, who would be the supreme and final revelation of God to man (*Deuteronomy* 18:15). And the New Testament assures us that this prophecy was fulfilled with the coming of Jesus Christ (*Acts* 3:22-26; *Hebrews* 1:1-2). He is that “Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people” (*Luke* 24:19). He is the eternal *Logos* who came to make known the Father (*John* 1:1,14,18).

During His earthly ministry, as Prophet, “He [Christ] went about the villages in a circuit teaching” (*Mark* 6:6). “Let us go into the next towns,” said Christ to His disciples, “that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth” (*Mark* 1:38). And when He taught the people, “He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (*Mark* 1:22). As Prophet, Christ claims to speak with the full authority of His Father (*John* 8:26-29; 12:49-50). He also foretells future events (*Matthew* 24-25; *Luke* 19:41-44; 21).

Subsequent to His ascension, Jesus continues His prophetic ministry by means of His Spirit, whom He sent (*John* 14:26; 16:13). This work first began in the days of the apostles, who were called by Christ (*Matthew* 10:1-4; *Acts* 1:1-2), and inspired by Christ’s Spirit (*2 Peter* 1:20-21), to complete the inscripturation of Christ’s inerrant, infallible Word (*2 Timothy* 3:16-17). And as stated in the *Confession* (1:6), it is in the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments alone that Christ has given us “the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life.” “The holy Scrip-

tures of the Old and New Testament,” says the *Larger Catechism* (Q 3), “are the Word of God, the *only* rule of faith and obedience.”

Further, Christ’s post-apostolic prophetic work now continues in the church through Gospel ministers who faithfully preach Christ’s Word (*Matthew* 28:18-20). As taught in the *Confession* (25:3):

Unto this catholic visible church Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and does by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto.

Christ’s prophetic ministry also has to do with the application and communication of salvation to the elect. As stated by the *Confession* (8:8), He accomplishes this by “revealing unto them [the elect], in and by the Word, the mysteries of salvation; effectually persuading them by His Spirit to believe and obey; and governing their hearts by His Word and Spirit.”

Finally, the prophetic function of Christ is evident in His role as Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He is the divine *Logos* who was in the beginning with the Father (*John* 1:1-2). And “all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (verse 3). How were “all things made?” By Christ’s prophetic Word! In the words of the author of *Hebrews*: “The worlds were framed by the Word of God” (11:3). As noted, the *Logos*, however, is not only the Creator of the universe, He is also its Sustainer. Christ “upholds all things by the Word of His power” (*Hebrews* 1:3).

### **The Office of Priest**

We have already seen that in God’s eternal plan of salvation, the purpose of Christ’s incarnation was that God would be glorified through the redemption of the elect.

In the words of Christ Himself, the Son of Man came “to give His life a ransom for many” (*Mark* 10:45); He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (*Luke* 19:10). This is Christ’s priestly function.

In the Old Covenant administration, the priests came through the line of Levi, in particular through Aaron (*Numbers* 3; 18; *Hebrews* 7). Whereas the prophets represented God to the people, the Old Testament priests represented the people to God, principally by offering gifts and sacrifices to God for the sins of the people (*Hebrews* 5:1). In this way the Aaronic priesthood functioned as intercessor. But the Old Testament also foretold the coming of a great high Priest, who would be, not from the line of Levi, but from the order of Melchizedek; and His priesthood would be forever: “The LORD has sworn and will not relent, You are a Priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek” (*Psalms* 110:4). We read in the New Testament that this is fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ (*Hebrews* 7), who was from the tribe of Judah (*7:14; Matthew* 1:1-17).

The author of *Hebrews* teaches that the animal sacrifices were insufficient for the removal of sin: “But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (10:3-4). Rather, the many and repeated sacrifices (10:11), functioned as “a shadow of the good things to come” (10:1). That is, they pointed to the coming of Messiah and His “one sacrifice for sins forever” (10:12). As taught in the *Confession* (7:5), under the Old Testament dispensation, God’s covenant “was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances...all fore-signifying Christ to come.” Sin can only be atoned for by the redemptive cross work of Christ (*Hebrews* 9:26-28). It is due solely to His saving work in behalf of the

elect that “their sins and lawless deeds I [God the Father] will remember no more” (*Hebrews* 10:17).

One of the most notable ways in which the atoning work of Christ is adumbrated in the Old Covenant is seen in Israel’s Day of Atonement. In *Leviticus* 16, we read that once per year the high priest would enter into the Holy of Holies to offer a sacrifice in behalf of the entire nation of Israel. There were two “goats” involved in this elaborate ceremony. The high priest offered up the “sacrificial goat” for the sins of the people. He then laid his hands on the second goat (the “scapegoat”), confessing the nation’s sins and symbolically transferring these sins to the second goat. The “scapegoat,” was then driven into the wilderness, outside the camp of Israel, to signify that God had not only forgiven the sins of the people, but that He remembered these sins no more. The nation had “escaped” the penalty of sin.

It is in the redemptive cross work of Jesus Christ that we see the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement. He fulfills the role of both goats. Christ suffered on the cross for the sins of the elect, shedding His blood in their behalf (*Hebrews* 9:28). But He was crucified outside the camp of the holy city Jerusalem (*Hebrews* 13:10-14), thereby revealing that through His priestly work the sins of God’s people are both forgiven and remembered no more (*Hebrews* 8:12; 10:17). Having lived a sinless life in obedience to the law of God (*Hebrews* 4:15; 5:8), thus fulfilling the covenant of works for the elect (*Romans* 5:19), Christ then died an atoning death in their behalf (*Matthew* 1:21; *Ephesians* 5:25). Divine justice was satisfied (*Romans* 5:1; 8:1; *Hebrews* 9:28).

In His priestly role, Jesus Christ, as the spotless Lamb of God, was both the subject and object of the perfect sacrifice. As seen, in His atoning cross work double imputation occurred: Christ’s righteous-



ness was imputed to the elect, and their sins were imputed to Him. Writes Paul: "For He [God the Father] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us [the elect], that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (*2 Corinthians* 5:21).<sup>58</sup>

The priestly activity of Christ did not cease at the cross. As the ascended, victorious Lord, He now sits at the right hand of the Father, where He continually intercedes for His church (*Romans* 8:34; *Hebrews* 7:25; 9:24). How does He do this? According to the *Larger Catechism* (Q 55):

Christ makes intercession, by His appearing in our nature continually before the Father in heaven, in the merit of His obedience and sacrifice on earth, declaring His will to have it applied to all believers; answering all accusations against them, and procuring for them quiet of conscience, notwithstanding daily failings, access with boldness to the throne of grace, and acceptance of their persons and services.

The fact that Jesus Christ, as intercessor, is now at the right hand of the Father guarantees that the prayers of genuine believers will be heard and answered accordingly. As Calvin writes: the ascended Christ is now "performing His office as Priest; for it belongs to a priest to intercede for the people, that they may obtain favor with God. This is what Christ is doing."<sup>59</sup>

This is the reason that Christ enjoins His people to pray in His name: "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (*John* 14:13-14). What does it mean to pray in Christ's name? The *Larger Catechism* (Q 180) answers:

---

<sup>58</sup> The nature of the atonement will be discussed below.

<sup>59</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries*, Vols. I-XXII (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), *Commentary on Hebrews* 7:25.

To pray in the name of Christ is, in obedience to His command, and in confidence on His promises, to ask mercy for His sake; not by bare mention of His name, but by drawing our encouragement to pray, and our boldness, strength, and hope of acceptance in prayer, from Christ and His mediation.

### The Office of King

In Rome, on the site of Nero's Circus Maximus, where many Christians were tortured and murdered, there was a stone obelisk, on which were chiseled these words: *Christus Vincit, Christus Regnat, Christus Imperat*, which means: "Christ is conquering, Christ is reigning, Christ rules over all."<sup>60</sup> Herein is Christ the King.

When the Bible speaks of Christ's kingship, it does so in two ways. First, as eternal deity, Christ has always been and always will be King over His created universe (*Psalms* 10:16; 29:10; 47:2; 90:2). He is King by divine right. Paul speaks to this in *Colossians* 1:15-17:

He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

But second, the Old Testament writings foretold the coming of a mediatorial, redemptive kingship, which is spiritual in nature (*Psalms* 2; 45; 72; 110; *Isaiah* 2:2-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-12:6; 65:17-25; *Daniel* 2:31-45; *Micah* 4:1-8). This kingship differs from the former kingship in that the mediatorial,

---

<sup>60</sup> This stone obelisk can still be seen today in front of St. Peter's Basilica.

redemptive kingship is conferred to the King. In the New Testament we read that in the fullness of the times, Jesus Christ came in fulfillment of these prophecies, as Mediator and Redeemer, to receive His Messianic investiture (*Matthew* 28:18-20; *John* 1:49; *Ephesians* 1:10-12, 20-23). In this kingdom, in a special sense, Christ reigns over the church. In *Colossians* 1:18-20 we read:

And He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

As King of the church (both Old and New Testaments), Jesus calls the elect out of this world to become members of His church (*John* 10:16,27), and by means of His Spirit, He reigns in them (*1 Corinthians* 3:16; 6:19-20; *2 Corinthians* 6:16). As King, Christ gives His church officers (*Ephesians* 4:11-12; *1 Corinthians* 12:28), laws (*Isaiah* 33:22; *James* 4:12), and censures (*Matthew* 18:15-20; *1 Corinthians* 5:4-5), by which He governs them. As King, He is continually working all things together for the good of the elect (*Romans* 8:28). Christ subdues their enemies, guards them against temptation, and exercises divine watchcare over every part of His people's lives (*Isaiah* 32:1; 33:2; 66:12; *Matthew* 18:20; 28:20; *Romans* 8:35-39; *1 Corinthians* 15:25).

Jesus, however, does not just reign over those who love Him. He also reigns over those who war against Him (*Psalms* 2). In the words of the Psalmist, Christ rules "in the midst of His enemies" (*Psalms* 110:2). Jesus Himself claims that "all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"

(*Matthew* 28:18). Therefore, writes Paul, "every knee should bow...and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (*Philippians* 2:9-11). And we are assured that those who do not so submit to Christ's Lordship will pay the penalty, when Christ returns "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*2 Thessalonians* 1:9).

This being the case, we are to understand that although there is a close relationship between the kingdom of God and the church, the two are not identical. Louis Berkhof correctly states that "the citizenship of the kingdom is co-extensive with the membership in the invisible church...its field of operation, however, is wider than that of the church, since it aims at the control of life in all its manifestations."<sup>61</sup>

The mediatorial "kingdom of Christ and God" (*Ephesians* 5:5) has two aspects: the already and the not yet. George Ladd explains:

The kingdom is a present reality (*Matthew* 12:28), and yet it is a future blessing (*1 Corinthians* 15:50). It is an inner spiritual redemptive blessing (*Romans* 14:17) which can be experienced only by the new birth (*John* 3:3), and yet it will have to do with the government of the nations and the world (*Revelation* 11:15). The kingdom is a realm into which men enter now (*Matthew* 21:31), and yet it is a realm into which they will enter tomorrow (*Matthew* 8:11). It is at the same time a gift of God which will be bestowed by God in the future (*Luke* 12:32), and yet which must be received in the present (*Mark*

---

<sup>61</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 409.

10:15).<sup>62</sup>

During His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ Himself instructed His hearers with regard to the already and not yet aspects of the mediatorial kingdom. In *Matthew* 13, for example, He teaches the parables of the kingdom. There we read that the kingdom of God (or heaven), which from an Old Testament perspective was viewed as one undivided unit, actually unfolds itself in two phases. The first stage is one of grace (verses 1-23, 44-46), the second one of power and glory (verses 30, 40-43, 47-50). And, says Jesus, during the time between His first and second advents, the kingdom will grow and prosper (verses 31-33).

At His first advent (which includes His perfect life, death, burial, and resurrection), Jesus Christ established His mediatorial, redemptive kingdom (*Matthew* 12:28; *Mark* 1:15; *Titus* 2:11). At this time, history entered into its final days: “the last days” (*Acts* 2:16-17; *Hebrews* 1:1-2). The time of the consummation of the ages has begun (*1 Corinthians* 10:11; *Hebrews* 9:26). These final days are also referred to as “this age” (*Luke* 16:8; *Galatians* 1:4), “this present age” (*1 Timothy* 6:17; *Titus* 2:12), “this present time” (*Luke* 18:30), “this time” (*Mark* 10:30), “these last times” (*1 Peter* 1:20), and the “last hour” (*1 John* 2:18). The Old Testament saints looked forward to that which the New Testament saints have witnessed – the inauguration of Christ’s kingdom (*1 Peter* 1:10-12). This present phase of Christ’s kingdom is one of grace (*Titus* 2:11; *Hebrews* 9:28).

Yet, Scripture also teaches that there is a second and future phase to this kingdom, which will be manifested at the second advent of Christ (*Matthew* 25:31-46; *Titus* 2:13). There is still a final phase, which is spoken of as “that age” (*Luke* 20:35), “the

age to come” (*Mark* 10:30; *Hebrews* 6:5), “the last time” (*1 Peter* 1:5), “the last day” (*John* 6:39-40, 44, 54), “the last trumpet” (*1 Corinthians* 15:52), “the end of the age” (*Matthew* 13:49; 28:20), and the “world to come” (*Hebrews* 2:5). The second and final phase of Christ’s kingdom is one of glory (*Titus* 2:13; *Hebrews* 9:28b).

During the present age, the interadventual period, Christ is at the right hand of His Father, while the church militant is carrying out the great commission of *Matthew* 28:18-20. Christ’s kingdom is advancing, as His enemies are being subdued under His feet, by the preaching of the Gospel (*Matthew* 16:17-19; *1 Corinthians* 15:20-25; *Hebrews* 10:12-13).

In conclusion, J. L. Dagg nicely summarizes our study of the offices of Jesus Christ:

The offices which Christ sustains toward us, are such as have been in highest repute among men. Prophets, priests, and kings have always been accounted worthy of honor. We should give the highest honor to Christ, who as a Prophet, is superior to Moses; as a Priest, superior to Aaron; and as a King, the Lord of David. These offices, as exercised by Christ, deserve our honor, not only because of their excellency, but also because of their adaptedness to us. We are, by nature, ignorant, guilty, and depraved. As ignorant, we need Christ, the Prophet, to teach us; as guilty, we need Christ, the Priest, to make atonement for us; and as depraved, we need Christ, as King, to rule over us, and bring all our rebellious passions into subjection.<sup>63</sup>

### The Atonement

<sup>62</sup> George E. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 18.

<sup>63</sup> J. L. Dagg, *Manual of Theology* (Harrisonburg: Gano Books, 1990), 231.

When we come to the study of the atonement, which is a part of Christ's priestly work, we come to the very heart of the message of Scripture. There is a very real sense in which "one could call the Gospels passion narratives with extended introductions."<sup>64</sup> That is, that the atonement was the purpose of the incarnation. As Christ Himself teaches, the Son of Man came "to give His life a ransom for many" (*Mark* 10:45). Calvin says it this way: "In short, the only reason given in Scripture that the Son of God willed to take our flesh, and accepted this commandment from the Father, is that He would be a sacrifice to appease the Father on our behalf."<sup>65</sup>

It is for this reason that the enemies of Christ have concentrated their attacks on the atonement. There have been a number of theories regarding this crucial doctrine. The Biblical view, as taught by the *Westminster Confession* (8:5), is sometimes referred to as the "satisfaction view," because it maintains that Christ's vicarious sacrifice perfectly satisfied the just demands of the Father: "The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, has fully satisfied the justice of the Father."

Before analyzing the Biblical view of the atonement, it will behoove us to overview some of the erroneous theories:<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> The quote is from Martin Kahler, *The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ*, translated by Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 48-49. Martin Kahler (1835-1912) was a German Protestant theologian, and no friend of orthodox Christianity. The use of his quote here is not to be understood as an endorsement of his theology.

<sup>65</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* II:12:4.

<sup>66</sup> See Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 384-391; and Leon Morris, "Theories of the Atonement," and S. N. Gundry, "Death of God Theology," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids Baker, 1984), 100-102, 301-302.

*The Ransom to Satan Theory.* In the early church, Origen (c. 185-254), Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-394), and others maintained that Christ's death is a ransom, in accordance with *Mark* 10:45, but it is a ransom paid to Satan, rather than to God the Father. In the bargain, Satan released his claims on fallen mankind, and accepted Christ as a ransom instead. Satan found, however, that after Christ's death, He could not be held captive, and He escaped the evil one at the resurrection. Satan, then, was left without his original prisoners or Christ as prisoner. This view was popular up until the days of Anselm (1033-1109).

*The Socinian Theory.* This view was developed in the sixteenth century by Faustus and Laelius Socinus, and is held today by the Unitarians. In this theory there is no vicarious sacrifice on Christ's part, because God does not require that sin be so punished. Rather, the cross work of Christ is to be seen as an example of genuine love and obedience on His part. In His death as well as in His life, Christ is the perfect model. This example should inspire us to do likewise, that is, to be as dedicated as Christ.

*The Moral Influence Theory.* In this view, held by men such as Peter Abelard (1079-1142) and Horace Bushnell (1802-1876), there is no idea of a sacrificial payment for sin in Christ's death, because it is not necessary. Rather, His death is a perfect demonstration of God's love. It should lead human beings to repentance, and soften their hearts to love others.

*The Mystical Theory.* This view, held by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Edward Irving (1792-1834), claims, in effect, that in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the divine life entered into the life of humanity in general, with the purpose of elevating it to the level of the divine. The change in man, then, is not ethical and objective; rather it is a mystical and subjective

change in man, whereby he more and more learns to depend upon God.

*The Death of God Theory.* This view, which is also known as “radical theology,” flourished in the mid-twentieth century. In one form or another, it has had different defenders, such as Paul Tillich (1886-1965) and Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976). When these theologians speak of the “death of God,” they do not mean that God once existed and then actually died. What is normally meant by the “death of God” is that He has ceased to be of significance. God is no longer necessary. Hence, in effect, He never was needed, nor did He really ever exist. Another twentieth century thinker, Thomas J. J. Altizer, however, does teach that God died on the cross in the Person of Christ. What Altizer means by this, however, is that God ceased to exist as transcendent, and became merely immanent, for the purpose of elevating humanity.

*The Governmental Theory.* This view, as espoused (seminally) by James Arminius (1560-1609) and (more fully by) his student Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), avers that God is the ruler of the “government” of the universe. God takes sin seriously, and He is perfectly just in punishing sin, because the Fall of man has dishonored Him. But God is also able to relax the law as well as the penalty due for sin. This is what He does in the death of Christ. This atonement, however, does not pay the penalty for sin. Rather, it is an example set forth to honor God’s law, and to make salvation possible for all men. What Christ did He did for all mankind, not just the elect. This is the view adopted by consistent Arminians.

*Anselm’s Satisfaction Theory.* Anselm (1033-1109), Archbishop of Canterbury, gives us his theory of the atonement in *Cur Deus Homo* (“Why God Became Man”). As Gordon Clark states, the explanation of the atonement in this little book “was a

notable step forward in theology.”<sup>67</sup> But it is still flawed. To his credit, Anselm rejected the ransom to Satan theory and saw the need for the satisfaction of divine justice in the death of Christ. God had been dishonored in the Fall, and His honor needed to be restored. And this, said Anselm, needed to be done, not by a third party, but by one who is both God and (sinless) man. Christ’s sacrificial death had infinite value, and was a work of supererogation. Thus, it merited a reward of infinite proportions. But since Christ did not need this reward, it could be given to others in the form of forgiveness of sins and eternal blessings in the presence of God. Sadly, however, Anselm’s view also maintains that what Christ did He did for all mankind. It thereby denies the immediate imputation of Christ’s cross work to the elect. Then too, this view says little about the need for Christ’s active obedience as a contributing factor in the atonement.

The Biblical teaching on the atonement is summarized in chapter 8 of the *Westminster Confession*.

It pleased God in His eternal purpose to ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man...unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be...redeemed... The Lord Jesus by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself...has fully satisfied the justice of His Father, and purchased...an everlasting inheritance...for all those whom the Father has given unto Him....To all those for whom Christ has purchased redemption, He does certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same...effectually persuading them by His Spirit to be-

---

<sup>67</sup> Gordon H. Clark, *The Atonement* (Trinity Foundation, 1987), 81.

lieve and obey.<sup>68</sup>

A synopsis of this summary statement follows:

*First*, the atonement was absolutely necessary. There have been some theologians, such as Augustine (354-430) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who taught what is known as the “hypothetical necessity” view of the atonement. This theory maintains that God could have chosen to save His elect people by some other means than the vicarious, sacrificial death of His Son. But this is not the case.

There are a number of passages which teach us that, in His eternal counsel, God determined to save His elect people by means of the atoning cross work of Christ, thereby rendering the atonement absolutely necessary. That is, the absolute necessity of Christ’s atonement is rooted in the eternal counsel (wisdom and will) of God.<sup>69</sup> In *Mark* 8:31, we read that Jesus “began to teach them [His disciples] that the Son of Man *must* [*dei*<sup>70</sup>] suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” In *Luke* 24:26, Jesus, by means of a rhetorical question, again teaches that His atoning death was absolutely necessary: “*Was it not necessary* [*dei*] for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” And the author of *Hebrews* teaches the same thing when he writes: “Therefore it was necessary [*ananke*<sup>71</sup>] that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these [animal sacrifices], but [necessary for] the heavenly things them-

selves [to be purified] with better sacrifices [Christ’s sacrificial death]” (9:23).

The very familiar verse *John* 3:16 strongly suggests that without Christ’s death there would be no salvation possible for sinners: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The same is true of *Romans* 8:31-32, where the apostle Paul argues from the “greater to the lesser,” that God will not withhold that which is lesser [giving the elect “all things”] if He has already given that which is greater [His Son]: “What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all [the elect], how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” The very thought that God the Father would “deliver up” His own Son indicates that there was no other way that lost sinners could be saved.

This is also inferred from Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: “O My Father, *if it is possible*, let this cup [of the cross] pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (*Matthew* 26:39). Due to the fact that Jesus always prayed in accordance with the will of the Father (*John* 11:41-42), it seems that this prayer evidences that it was not possible for Jesus to avoid death on the cross. It was absolutely necessary.

Then there is the need for a sacrifice of infinite value, which could only have been made by the one who is both God and man: Jesus Christ. Robert Reymond explains:

Every sin that a person commits carries with it infinite disvalue, that is to say, every sin, because it violates the holy character of the infinite God, deserves infinite punishment and no compensation given by the sinner to the righteous Lawgiver of the universe would ever make an act of dis-

<sup>68</sup> See Clark, *The Atonement*, 145. Dr. Clark here is conflating and summarizing chapter 8 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

<sup>69</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* II:12:1.

<sup>70</sup> The impersonal verb *dei*, translated here as “must,” stresses the “necessity” of the action described – in this case the suffering of Christ.

<sup>71</sup> The noun *ananke* translated here as “necessary,” also stresses the “necessity” of the action described.

obedience against Him right in His sight in the slightest degree. But if every sin is of infinite disvalue, then the means of retribution for that sin which God's holy nature demands must of necessity be of infinite value, which fact rules out any offering to God's offended holiness other than or less than Christ's own infinitely efficacious work at Calvary.<sup>72</sup>

For these reasons, the great majority of Reformed theologians hold to what is known as the "consequent absolute necessity" of the atoning death of Christ. In the words of John Murray:

The word "consequent" in this designation points to the fact that God's will or decree to save any is of His free and sovereign grace....The terms "absolute necessity," however, indicate that God, having elected some to everlasting life out of His mere good pleasure, was [due to his eternal counsel – WGC] under the necessity of accomplishing this purpose through the sacrifice of His own Son, a necessity arising from the perfection of His own nature.<sup>73</sup>

*Second*, the atonement was a vicarious and penal sacrifice. The Bible teaches that Christ's cross work was sacrificial in nature. In *1 Corinthians* 5:7 we read: "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was *sacrificed* for us." In *Ephesians* 5:2 Paul writes that Christ "has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a *sacrifice* to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." And the author of *Hebrews* claims that Christ has come "to put away sin by the *sacrifice* of Himself" (9:26).

But not only was the atonement a work of sacrifice, it was a vicarious or substitutionary sacrifice. This is taught in the first two verses cited in the preceding paragraph (*1*

*Corinthians* 5:7 and *Ephesians* 5:2), where Paul specifically states that Christ's sacrifice was "for us."<sup>74</sup> Christ gave His life for the elect church. He vicariously suffered in their behalf. This is also seen in passages such as *Mark* 10:45, where we are told that Christ came "to give His life a ransom *instead of [anti] many*"; and *2 Corinthians* 5:21 where we read that Christ was made "*sin in behalf of [huper] us [the elect]*."

And thirdly, not only was the atonement a vicarious sacrifice, it was one in which Christ paid a penalty; it was a penal sacrifice. Christ was not a third party in the atonement. As God, He was the offended party. And since God is not under the law (*Isaiah* 33:22; *James* 4:12), and since He is impassable (*Malachi* 3:6), only as man could Christ fulfill the law (in His active obedience) for the elect, and suffer the brunt of the penalty due His people.

Christ, then, suffered the penalty due to the elect for their sins. Says Paul: "For He [God the Father] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us [to bear our penalty], that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (*2 Corinthians* 5:21); and again: "Christ has redeemed us [the elect] from the curse of the law, having become a curse [He bore the penalty] for us" (*Galatians* 3:13).

*Third*, the atonement was a one time sacrifice. The Pentateuch is replete with passages that teach us that under the Old Testament administration, sacrifices were continually being offered up to God. But in contrast, Christ's sacrifice was a "once for all" occurrence. The author of *Hebrews* states: "And every [Old Testament] priest

<sup>72</sup> Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 666.

<sup>73</sup> John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955, 1980), 12.

<sup>74</sup> This writer is well aware of the fact that (sadly) the Critical Text version of *1 Corinthians* 5:7 does not have "for us." This writer, however, is an advocate of the Traditional or Majority Text version of the New Testament, not the Critical Text. The Critical Text does, however, have "for us" in *Ephesians* 5:2.

stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But this Man [Christ], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God” (10:11-12). Then in *Romans* 6:9-10; *Hebrews* 7:27; 9:12,28; 10:10; and *1 Peter* 3:18, we are taught the same thing. In these verses the Greek word group *hapax, ephapax* (“once”) speaks of the unrepeatable nature of Christ’s sacrifice; it is a “once for all” atonement.

*Fourth*, the atonement is a work of reconciliation (*Romans* 5:10-11; *2 Corinthians* 5:17-21; *Ephesians* 2:14-17). *Romans* 5:10-11 reads:

For if when 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. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Reconciliation presupposes both divine and human alienation. That is, both God and man are alienated from one another. God’s alienation, of course, is a holy and justifiable alienation, due to man’s sin against Him. Man’s alienation, on the other hand, is unholy and unjustifiable. When it comes to reconciliation, then, the primary concern in Scripture is that of God’s alienation. And Christ’s reconciling act is most particularly Godward in import. Writes John Murray:

When we examine the Scripture more closely we shall find...[that] it is not our enmity against God that comes to the forefront in the reconciliation but God’s alienation from us. This alienation on the part of God arises indeed from our sin; it is our sin that evokes this reaction of His holiness. But it is God’s alienation from us that is brought into the foreground whether the recon-

ciliation is viewed as action or result.<sup>75</sup>

*Fifth*, the atonement is a work of redemption: Jesus Christ “gave Himself for us [the elect], that He might *redeem* us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people” (*Titus* 2:14). The concept of redemption presupposes bondage. Guilty sinners owe a sin debt to God (not Satan). And the sinner in bondage needs to be redeemed at a ransom price. According to Scripture, Christ’s atoning work paid this price: “For you [the church] were bought at a *price*” (*1 Corinthians* 6:20); and the price was paid as a ransom: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a *ransom* for many” (*Mark* 10:45). And this ransom was paid to the Father, who raised Christ from the dead, thereby signifying, in part, acceptance of the ransom. In redemption, Christ is the subject, and elect sinners are the objects.

*Sixth*, as we have already seen, the atonement is rooted in the covenant which God established with the elect (*Hebrews* 9:15-18). As taught in the *Westminster Confession* (7:3):

Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant [of works], the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life [the elect] His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.

Significantly, the root meaning of the Greek word for covenant, *diatheke*, is “a

---

<sup>75</sup> Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, 34.



placing or setting between two.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, etymologically, a Biblical *diatheke* has as its purpose a bringing of two warring parties back into an “at-one-ment.”

*Seventh*, the atonement has as its starting point the free love of God in Christ. *John* 3:16 reads: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” And again in *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.” That is to say, God does not love His elect people because of anything in them; nor does He love them because Christ died for them. Rather, it is because God has eternally loved His elect people that He sent His Son to atone for their sins.

*Eighth*, the atonement was a voluntary act on the part of Christ. As stated in the *Confession* (8:4): “This office [of Mediator] the Lord Jesus did most willingly undertake.” And Christ Himself stated: “No one takes it [His life] from Me, but I lay it down Myself” (*John* 10:18).

*Ninth*, the atonement was a propitiatory sacrifice. There are four times in the New Testament where the Greek word for “propitiation,” either in verb or noun form, is used with regard to Christ’s atoning work: *Hebrews* 2:17 (*hilaskomai*), *Romans* 3:25 (*hilasterion*), *1 John* 2:2 and 4:10 (*hilasmos*). Propitiation presupposes divine wrath. And the atonement is that which turns aside God’s wrath.

Some scholars, such as Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) and C. H. Dodd (1884-1973), have argued that the atonement is a work of expiation (a taking away of sins), but not a work of propitiation (the turning aside of

God’s wrath). The reason being, in effect, is that God is not angry with human sin; hence, there is no need for a propitiatory work of atonement. The *Revised Standard Version* and the *New English Bible* are in agreement with this analysis. Hence, their respective translations of the four verses cited above, “propitiation” does not appear.

The witness of the Scripture, however, is clear. God is angry with sin and sinners. And His wrath must be turned aside if man is going to be saved. Christ’s atoning cross work accomplishes just that. It takes away sin, and appeases divine wrath, thus satisfying divine justice (*Romans* 3:21-26; 5:1-10). John Murray correctly states:

Suffice it to be reminded that the essence of the judgment of God against sin is His wrath, His holy recoil against what is the contradiction of Himself....If Christ vicariously bore God’s judgment upon sin, and to deny this is to make nonsense of His suffering unto death and particularly of the abandonment on Calvary, then to eliminate from this judgment that which belongs to its essence is to undermine the idea of vicarious sin-bearing and its consequences. So the doctrine of propitiation is not to be denied or its sharpness in any way toned down.<sup>77</sup>

The primary reference of the cross, then, is not manward, but Godward. Thus, Christ is the subject, and the Father is the object in propitiation.

*Tenth*, Christ’s atoning cross work was one of destruction of the kingdom of evil. Jesus confronted the enemies of God’s people, and in their overthrow, emerged as victor. He defeated Satan (*Hebrews* 2:14-15; *1 John* 3:8), death (*1 Corinthians* 15:54-57; *2*

<sup>76</sup> A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 580.

<sup>77</sup> John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), II:145.

*Timothy* 1:10), sin (*John* 1:29; *Romans* 6:1-11), and the world (*John* 1:29; 16:33). John Murray writes:

In this connection it is most significant that the work of Christ, which is so central in our Christian faith, is essentially a work of destruction that terminates upon the power and work of Satan. This is not a peripheral or incidental feature of redemption. It is an integral aspect of its accomplishment. Our Lord Himself, as He was approaching Calvary, said, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (*John* 12:31).<sup>78</sup>

*Eleventh*, Christ's atoning cross work was sufficient to save all men, but it was efficient to save only the elect. That is, it was unlimited in power, but limited or particular in extent.<sup>79</sup> The *Confession* (8:5) says it this way: "The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself, which He, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, has...purchased...an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father has given unto Him."

When it is said that Christ's death was sufficient to save all men what is meant is that had that been its design, Christ would not have had to suffer more or do more than He did. That is to say, the intrinsic worth of Christ's death is unlimited in scope.

Nevertheless, Christ's atonement is efficient in its salvific import only for the elect of every tribe, nation, and tongue (*John* 11:51-52; *Revelation* 5:9). This is taught in a number of ways in Scripture. The language of Scripture is particular when it speaks of the beneficiaries of the atonement. They

are referred to as His "people" (*Matthew* 1:21), His "sheep" (*John* 10:11,15), His "friends" (*John* 15:13), His "church" (*Acts* 20:28; *Ephesians* 5:25), the "elect" (*Romans* 8:31-34), and His "body" (*Ephesians* 5:23). Now it is true that these statements of particularity do not logically rule out a universality. But at the same time, they clearly indicate that Jesus Christ stands in a different kind of relationship with these people than He does with the others. Also, we should ask if it is rationally consistent to believe that Christ's death was salvifically efficacious even for those who were in hell at the time He was crucified (such as the men and women who were destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrah; *Genesis* 19; *Jude* 7)?

Then too, we are told in Scripture that Christ does not pray "for the world," but only for "those whom You [the Father] have given Me" (*John* 17:9). And only His sheep hear and know His voice, and follow Him (*John* 10:4,14,26-27).

The Bible also makes it very clear that Christ died a death that actually merited salvation for His people. In *Hebrews* 9:12, for example, we read that "with His own blood He [Christ] entered the Most Holy Place once for all, *having obtained eternal redemption.*" This verse clearly teaches that those for whom Christ died have "obtained eternal redemption." Hence, if Christ died to save all mankind, as taught by some Arminians, then all men would necessarily be saved. But the witness of Scripture is very clear that all men are not saved (see *Matthew* 25:31-46; *Acts* 1:25; *Jude* 7; *Revelation* 20:11-15). Therefore, Christ could not have died to save all mankind.

Finally, there is the fact that the three members of the Trinity always work together in perfect harmony (*1 Corinthians* 14:33; *Malachi* 3:6). This is necessarily true, because the three Persons of the Godhead have one will, one plan, one eternal decree. They never work at odds one with another.

<sup>78</sup> Murray, *Collected Writings*, II:68.

<sup>79</sup> This "limited" in extent doctrine is the "L" for "limited atonement" in the Calvinist acrostic TULIP.

This being the case, it is not conceivable that the Second Person of the Godhead would be out of accord with the other two Persons. That is, since the Father has chosen only some individuals to be saved (*Ephesians* 1:4); and since the Spirit regenerates and seals only a certain number (*Titus* 3:5-6; *Ephesians* 1:13-14); then the Son's atoning work could not have been unlimited in salvific efficacy. Christ died to save only those whom the Father had chosen – those who will be regenerated and sealed by the Spirit: the elect.

Arminians are quick to point out that there are a number of passages in the Bible which use universal terminology. That is, they speak of Christ dying for "all" people, and for "the world." But when exegetically scrutinized, these passages in fact do not teach a universal atonement.

*First Timothy* 2:1-6, as an example of the "all" people passages, states that "the Man Christ Jesus...gave Himself a ransom for all" (verses 5-6). But this must be interpreted in harmony with the earlier verses where we read that we are to pray "for all men" (verse 1), and that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (verse 4). Now it is abundantly obvious that Paul is not teaching that God actually desires the salvation of the entirety of humanity, since then all men would be saved. For "no purpose of [God's] can be thwarted" (*Job* 42:2). Further, as we have seen, there are Bible passages that teach us that God does not desire the salvation of every person (*Acts* 1:25; *Matthew* 7:21-23; 25:31-46). And there are passages that say that God has chosen only certain men for salvation (*Ephesians* 1:4-5; *Romans* 8:28-30; 9:14-23). These things being so, it seems best to interpret the passage as Calvin does, that God desires the salvation of the elect among all sorts of men, without distinction of tribe, tongue, and nation. And these elect from every tribe, tongue, and nation

are the ones for whom Christ "gave Himself a ransom."<sup>80</sup>

*Second Peter* 3:9 is another such verse: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us (*hemas*), not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." But the verse itself explains who the "any" are that the Lord does not wish to perish; they are the "us" – the elect church of Christ.

*First John* 2:2 is an example of those verses which state that Christ died for "the world." The verse reads: "And He [Christ] Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." Who are the ones who comprise "the whole world?" As taught in *John* 11:52-53 and *Revelation* 5:9, we are to understand that Christ died for persons, not just from among the Jews, but from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Christ is "the Savior of the world" (*John* 4:42). There is no necessity to maintain that this verse teaches that Christ's atonement was salvifically universal in scope. Rather, as John Murray avers, it is an "ethnic universalism" about which John is speaking.<sup>81</sup>

As stated by Loraine Boettner, the conclusion of the matter is, that with regard to the salvific efficacy of Christ's atonement, "it was an objective work accomplished in history which removed all legal barriers against those to whom it was to be applied."<sup>82</sup> And they are the elect of God.

## **Appendix**

### **Christian Exclusivism**

Christian exclusivism, which has been the view adhered to by the Reformed and or-

---

<sup>80</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on 1 Timothy* 2:1-6.

<sup>81</sup> Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, 73.

<sup>82</sup> Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Faith* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1983), 13.

thodox church through the centuries, is that teaching which maintains that (1) Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and (2) that it is essential for one to believe in Him in order to be saved. This view is admirably set forth in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Q 21), the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (10:4; 14:2) and the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (Q 60) as follows:

The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature [general revelation], and the law of that religion they do profess. And, to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.

But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

They who, having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in Him, cannot be saved...neither is their salvation in any other, but in Christ alone, who is the Savior only of His body the church.

There are a number of Biblical passages which teach Christian exclusivism. Four of the very strongest are *John* 3:16-18,36; *John* 14:6; *Acts* 4:12; and *1 Timothy* 2:5.

*John* 3:16-18,36: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not

perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God....He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on Him."

These verses could hardly be clearer. Those who believe in Christ have everlasting life, and those who do not believe in Him are condemned. Faith in Jesus Christ is a *sine qua non* to salvation. One cannot be saved without this faith.

*John* 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Here in Christ's own words we are taught that He is the only way to the Father. "No one comes to the Father except through" Jesus Christ. Once again, words could hardly be clearer. Those who do not know Jesus Christ cannot be saved. Writes William Hendriksen, in this verse, "both the absoluteness [exclusivism] of the Christian religion and the urgent necessity of Christian missions is clearly indicated."<sup>83</sup>

*Acts* 4:12: "Nor is there salvation in any other [than Jesus Christ], for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must [*dei*] be saved." Peter's words, as recorded by Luke, are as straightforward and exclusivistic as those that we read in the *Gospel of John*. Christ is the only Savior. According to Simon Kistemaker:

The word *must* [*dei*] reveals a divine necessity which God has established,

---

<sup>83</sup> William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953, 1954), II:269.

according to His plan and decree, to save us [the elect] through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, this word [*dei*] signifies that man is under moral obligation to respond to the call to believe in Jesus Christ and thus gain salvation. He has no recourse to salvation other than through the Son of God.<sup>84</sup>

*First Timothy 2:5*: “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.” Here in the words of the apostle Paul, just as there is only *one* true and living God, there is also only “*one* Mediator between God and men,” and that Mediator is “the Man Christ Jesus.” In other words, there is no other way that man can be saved except through Jesus Christ. Charnock writes:

Christ is said to be the one Mediator in the same sense that God is said to be the one God. As there is but one Creator of man, so there is but one Mediator for men. As God is the God of all that died before Christ came, as well as of those that died after; so Christ is the Mediator of all that died before His coming, as well as of those that saw His day. They had Christ as their Mediator, or some other; some other they could not have, because there is but one. They might as well have had another Creator besides God, as another Mediator besides the Mediator Christ Jesus....There is but one God from eternity; but one Mediator, whose mediation has the same date as the foundation of the world, and

runs parallel to it.<sup>85</sup>

Although the true church of Christ has always held to the view of Christian exclusivism, there have always been those who demur. Sadly, the opponents of Christian exclusivism, even within the alleged Christian camp, are on the increase today. Ronald Nash writes:

Once upon a time Christians were identifiable by an unqualified commitment to Jesus Christ as the one and only Savior of the world. But the unity of [alleged] Christians has disappeared. Today many people who claim to be Christians choose among three fundamentally different answers to the question, “Is Jesus the only Savior?” These answers can be stated succinctly: No!; Yes, but...; Yes period!<sup>86</sup>

The negative answer (“No!”) is given by those called pluralists. Pluralists, such as John Hick,<sup>87</sup> deny both that (1) Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and (2) that it is essential for one to believe in Him in order to be saved. Salvation, say the pluralists, may come by any one of a number of the world’s different religions, and by any one of a number of different saviors. Hick explains: “There is not merely one way but a plurality of ways of salvation...taking place in different ways within the contexts of all the great religious traditions.”<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Cited by the editor in John Calvin, *Commentaries*, Vols. I-XXII (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), *Commentary on 1 Timothy 2:5n*.

<sup>86</sup> Ronald H. Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 9. Although the present writer does not agree with everything taught by Dr. Nash in this book, he has found it to be extremely useful in dealing with this subject. A number of Dr. Nash’s insights have been incorporated into this Appendix.

<sup>87</sup> See John Hick, *God Has Many Names* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), and *Problems of Religious Pluralism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985).

<sup>88</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, 34.

---

<sup>84</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 156.

Suffice it to say, that the position adopted by religious pluralists is so obviously out of accord with the teachings of Scripture, that it cannot rationally be considered a “Christian” view at all. That is, if *John* 3:16-18,36; 14:6; *Acts* 14:6; and *1 Timothy* 2:5 are truly the teachings of Scripture (which they are), then there is no possibility that there is another Savior than Jesus Christ. And if Christianity is the one true religion (which it is), then all of the other religions are false. It is as simple as that. “Christian pluralism” is an oxymoron. Pluralism is anti-Christian. Jesus says it this way: “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters” (*Luke* 11:23).

There are, however, a growing number of alleged Christians thinkers, such as Gavin D’Costa,<sup>89</sup> Clark Pinnock,<sup>90</sup> and John Sanders,<sup>91</sup> who answer the question “Is Jesus the only Savior?” with a qualified affirmative “Yes, but...” This group adheres to what is known as “Christian inclusivism.” Inclusivists aver that “yes” Jesus is indeed the only Savior, “but” they say that it is not necessary for persons to know about Jesus Christ or to believe in Him to receive the benefits of His redemptive work. That is, as Nash correctly says, inclusivists “distinguish between the *ontological necessity* of Christ’s work as Redeemer and the separate claim that Christ’s redemptive work is *epistemologically necessary*.”<sup>92</sup> Inclusivist John Sanders explains:

The unevangelized are saved or lost on the basis of their commitment, or lack thereof, to the God who saves through the work of Jesus. [Inclusiv-

ists] believe that appropriation of salvific grace is mediated through general revelation and God’s providential workings in human history. Briefly, inclusivists affirm the particularity and finality of salvation only in Christ but deny that knowledge of His work is necessary for salvation.<sup>93</sup>

Inclusivism is progressively becoming the predominant view in Roman Catholicism. As Nash points out, this movement is one of the legacies of Vatican Council II (1962-1965), where it was concluded: “They also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His church, yet sincerely seek God, and moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience [general revelation].”<sup>94</sup>

Obviously, then, God’s self-revelation by means of general revelation is crucial to the inclusivists’ theory. For this is (allegedly) the means by which God leads some to saving faith apart from belief in Christ. So too, say the inclusivists, there is a necessary distinction between “believers” and Christians.” The former are saved because they have put their faith in God. The latter, on the other hand, are saved because they have put their faith in Christ.<sup>95</sup>

There are several difficulties here. First, the Bible makes no distinction between believers and Christians. That is, believers are called believers because they have “believed” in Christ (*John* 3:16-18,36). Further, we are taught in Scripture that “whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; [but] he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also” (*1 John* 2:23; see also *John* 5:23). Saul of Tarsus is one example of

<sup>89</sup> Gavin D’Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

<sup>90</sup> Clark Pinnock, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

<sup>91</sup> John Sanders, *No Other Name* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).

<sup>92</sup> Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?*, 23.

<sup>93</sup> Sanders, *No Other Name*, 215.

<sup>94</sup> Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?*, 108-109.

<sup>95</sup> Sanders, *No Other Name*, 224-225.

a “believer” in God, who was so diligent in his Judaism that he denied Christianity to the point of openly persecuting Christ’s church (*Acts* 9:1-3; 22:1-5; 26:1-11). But until he was confronted by Jesus Christ and converted on the road to Damascus (*Acts* 9:3-19; 22:6-16; 26:12-18), he considered himself to be the unsaved chief of sinners (*1 Timothy* 1:12-16; see also *Philippians* 3:3-16).

And second, Scripture teaches that although general revelation reveals God as Creator, thus leaving men without excuse (*Romans* 1:18-21; 2:14-15), it does not reveal Him as Savior. Scripture is necessary for redemptive knowledge (*Romans* 1:16-17; 10:17). As taught in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:1):

Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which makes the Holy Scripture to be most necessary.

These things being so, the theory of the inclusivists is completely obviated. The Bible denies inclusivism, and clearly teaches Christian exclusivism: “He who believes in Him [Christ] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he does not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of

God....He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (*John* 3:18,36). Simply stated, inclusivism, like pluralism, is not a Christian view at all. Denying the straightforward teachings of Scripture, it is anti-Christian.

***Built Upon The Rock***  
***A Study of the Doctrine of the Church***  
***By W. Gary Crampton, Th.D.***  
***& Pastor Richard Bacon***

This short (52pp) booklet by Crampton and Bacon is designed to explain the basics of Presbyterian Church Government. The booklet would be excellent for teaching church classes on the subject and should be read by all Presbyterian church office-holders or those intending church office.

“The authors understand the eternal Christ to be the Rock upon which the church is built. There may be other organizations built upon Peter (or rather, who think they are), but only the church is built upon the eternal Son of God. We shall go so far as to maintain that except a church is built upon the Rock of Christ, it is no church of his.”

Sections include, Covenant Theology and the Church, Meaning of the Word “Church,” Attributes of the Church, Marks of the True Church, Authority of the Church, Duties of the Church, Church State Relationship, Government of the Church, Church Officers.

Single Copy \$3.95ea. 2-24 Copies \$2.40ea. 25 Copies & up \$1.95ea.

*Blue Banner Publications:*

# Presbyterian Tracts

***Public Worship to be Preferred before Private.*** \$3.95. David Clarkson (Puritan). Classic puritan sermon demonstrating the priority of public worship over private and family worship.

***Scriptural Worship,*** by Carl Bogue. The first tract in Blue Banner Books’ Presbyterian Tracts series. This is a very good handout to introduce someone to the Reformed view of worship. \$1.25. Order ten for \$6.00 and 25 or more at \$0.40 each.

***What Mean Ye By This Service,*** by Richard Bacon. Pastor Bacon has written one of the most significant and convincing responses to the advocates of Paedo-Communion. \$4.00 each. Tract Two in Presbyterian Tracts. Dr. Joseph C. Moorecraft, pastor of Chalcedon Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, calls this the best treatment of the subject of paedocommunion. Order 10 for \$20.00. 25 or greater at \$1.50 each.

***Instrumental Music in Religious Worship.*** By Rev. John M’Donald. A brief 4 page tract against the practice of using musical accompaniment in public worship. \$0.50. Tract Three in Presbyterian Tracts. Order ten for \$4.00. Order 25 to 100 at \$0.15 each.

***The Sovereignty of God in the Salvation of my Father’s Slayer.*** By Professor Francis Nigel Lee of Queensland Presbyterian Theological Seminary. This is the moving account of how God used the power of the gospel to bring an accused murderer to Christ. Dr. Lee was the means God used in explaining the gospel to the very man who slew his father. Tract Four in Presbyterian Tracts. \$0.50. Order ten for \$4.00. Order 25 to 100 at \$0.15 each.



# A Directory of Domestic Duties

**Richard Bacon**

Now available is the entire 25 part tape series entitled *A Directory of Domestic Duties*. These are very practical sermons about family relationships, dating, child rearing and the duties of husband, wife and child. This is a *how and why* directory of family duties and responsibilities. It is an extremely helpful study for each member of the family of all ages and at all stages of life. Whether you are a young person beginning to look for a godly life partner, or newlyweds wanting to build a family on a Biblical basis, or parents facing the teenage years with your children, this series can be of use to you. \$40.00 for 25 tapes in poly boxes. \$55.00 for the series in cassette albums.

Also available in small sets of topical sermons as listed below:

**The Covenant as Structure of Society**

4 tapes - \$10.00

**The Scriptural Doctrine of Marriage**

4 tapes — \$10.00

**How to find a Life Partner**

4 tapes – \$10.00

**Duties of a Godly Husband**

3 tapes – \$7.50

**Duties of a Godly Wife**

4 tapes – \$10.00

**Scriptural Basis for Family Government**

3 tapes – \$7.50

**Warnings to Children**

3 tapes – \$7.50

**The First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett**

---

*The Blue Banner* is published by The First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett, Texas (Reformation Presbyterian Church).

**Contact Information:** Email: [pastor@fpcr.org](mailto:pastor@fpcr.org) WEB: <http://www.fpcr.org> Church Mail: P O Box 141084, Dallas, TX. 75214. Phone: 972-475-2184. Fax: 972-475-5317. Order line: 800-484-9377, code FPCR (3727).

**Worship Services:** 10:30 AM and 2:00 PM on each Lord's Day. Visitors are welcome to stay for **lunch** between the two services. **Biblical Institutes:** 4:00 PM.

**Location:** First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett meets at 8210 Schrade Road, Rowlett, TX. From Interstate 30, take exit 64 north on Dalrock Road. From the Diamond Shamrock gas station, go 1.5 miles north to Schrade Road. Turn left and go approximately 1/4 mile. We are in the first building on the left. Parking is in the rear of the building.

**Order Form**

---

THE BLUE BANNER, P O BOX 141084, DALLAS, TX 75214

| Item   | Qty | Price Each | Total |
|--|-----|------------|-------|
| Blue Banner Subscription                                 |     | \$15.00    |       |
| Domestic Duties (Poly)                                   |     | \$40.00    |       |
| Domestic Duties (album)                                  |     | \$55.00    |       |
| Built Upon the Rock                                      |     | \$3.95     |       |
| Other (attach list)                                      |     |            |       |
| Add'l Copies of Christ the Mediator                      |     | \$3.95     |       |
| Add 10% for postage and handling (\$3.50 min) USA Only.* |     |            |       |
| <b>Total</b>   |     |            |       |

\*Orders from outside the USA must be paid in US funds drawn on a U.S. bank. Please write for additional shipping costs.